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TWELVE SERMONS

FROM THE

QUARESIMALE OF P. PAOLO SEGNERI

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL ITALIAN

BY

JAMES FORD, A.M.,
Prebendary of Exeter Cathedral.

SECOND SERIES.

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PREFACE

TO THE SECOND SERIES, AS PUBLISHED IN THE FIRST EDITION.

In the Preface to the former volume of Segneri's Sermons, the translator expressed the doubts he entertained of the success of his undertaking. He was aware of the new and somewhat hazardous ground he was about to tread. What raised a Jesuit Priest to the highest distinction, as a preacher, what charmed and edified an Italian audience two hundred years ago, might, from various causes it is not necessary to particularise, fail in producing any such effect on the English reader of the present day. He therefore only ventured on the publication of the first twelve Sermons of the *Quaresimale*, and left it to his critics and readers, with this specimen in their hands, to give him their opinion, and to decide for him whether he should proceed with the remainder. The verdict having been pronounced in favour of his work, and substantially expressed by an early call for a second edition, he now redeems his pledge by presenting them with another series, in the hope that it may prove not less acceptable, than its predecessor.

To have afforded satisfaction to any, by making them acquainted with Italian Sacred Oratory, in the person of one of its greatest ornaments, is a reflection very gratifying to the translator. Safeguards being provided against the intro-

duction of error, surely we are to blame, if we neglect, from whatever motive, to enrich ourselves with so much, that is the property of our common Christianity, and so well calculated to be a stimulus and help, especially in regard to the Ministry, and to the best method of preaching the Word of God. As different countries benefit each other by an interchange of their several articles of peculiar produce, so good arises to the branches in the Church Catholic by an interchange of a far higher order. Like distant quarters of the globe, they are thus united together by a common interest—some comfort to us under "our unhappy divisions." Italy, then, may take a lesson from the more exact, profound, and reverent character of Anglican divinity; and we, in return, our preachers more especially, may derive some fresh inspiration from the more warm, animated, and expansive rhetoric of the South.[1]

The translator, however, must renounce the flattering idea he had once formed of his being the first to introduce to his countrymen any Italian theologian of mark and renown. For, since the publication of his first series, he has met with an English version of one of those eminent men, mentioned by him in his original Preface—*Valsecchi*, formerly the chief public professor of theology in the University of Padua, whose celebrated work—*The Foundations of Religion, and the Fountains of Impiety*—was translated by the Rev. Thomas Carbry, in three vols. 8vo., and published in Dublin, in 1800. The design of Valsecchi's treatise was to expose the false and dangerous principles of the free-thinkers of the English and French schools of infidelity. It was followed by a supplement, or rather rejoinder to the answer of his opponents, entitled *Religion Triumphant*, considered to be his best work. He was

[1] It must not be supposed, as it frequently is, that the eloquence of the Italian consists in the mere fervency of an impassioned imagination, as apart from a due exercise of the judgment and reasoning faculties. So far from this being the fact, Padre Giuseppe Malmusi has published an edition of this *Quaresimale*, with the object of showing that every sermon is constructed throughout on the rules of oratory, laid down by Cicero and Quintilian. At the close of each discourse, he appends a logical analysis of its contents, and reduces the leading arguments to the form of so many enthymemes, pointing out their force and propriety. This edition is scarce. *Ivrea*, 1844.

also the author, like many other Italian preachers, of a *Quaresimale.*

The attention of the Church has lately been called in a remarkable manner to the best mode of enlightening the ignorant, and reclaiming the irreligious in our great cities, especially in the metropolis; and a distinguished Theological Review has recommended Segneri's style of preaching, as being well adapted to this very important end. The translator certainly has no wish to propose his author, as a model, in general, to his Clerical brethren. He is rather convinced that our own standard of taste and correctness is preferable, in some respects, to what is occasionally found in these pages; but, for the above-mentioned particular object, he considers that we may copy with advantage Segneri's characteristic excellencies, as a preacher; for instance, his heartiness and zeal for souls, his unsparing reproof of particular sins and of the vices fashionable in his day, his determination to get a hearing and to carry his point; and then, his close combating with the wickedness and evasiveness of the human heart; and, above all, his peculiar power—the power of a gifted and well stored mind—in presenting Scripture-truth under so many varied, attractive, and luminous points of view. It was by these means that he arrested and fixed the attention of the ignorant and irreligious. It was thus, that he not only succeeded in making himself understood, but so spake, as to prevent the possibility of his being misunderstood by any class of his hearers. And this, after all, is the most useful preaching and the best style of eloquence, when, without lowering our Ministry or our Sacred subject, we bring ourselves within the reach of the most ordinary capacity; when we are able to interest, while we instruct, and to win, while we convince—*delectando, pariterque monendo.*

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SERMON XIV.

ON THE INCONSOLABLE TORMENTS OF HELL.

S. Luke xvi. 22, 23.

"The rich man also died, and was buried: and in hell he lifted up his eyes."

1. Either repent or perish! Why do I weary myself here, day after day, in preaching all these sermons? Either repent or perish! You must decide one way or the other: and can there be a person among you, who, rather than choose repentance, would wish for hell? Ah, were it so, such conduct would prove to my mind beyond all question, that he had never once set himself to consider what is meant by so terrible a condemnation. Permit me therefore, this morning, to lay aside other matters, and to devote my whole labour entirely to this point. Mighty Lord God, Thou, who bearest in Thy hand those keys, which in their solid strength so far surpass the jasper and diamond, graciously allow me their use, but for a little while. Fain would I expose to view that horrible prison-house of condemned souls; not indeed from any fond desire to restore them to liberty, to supply water to their flames, or balms to their wounds, or some respite to their bewailing cries. This I feel to be impossible. My aim then, is simply this; that not one among these my hearers, these my beloved brethren, who have shown me so much kindness, may ever come to this place of torment. And for this purpose, I would endeavour to represent it, however faintly, to their minds; that the eyes of the sinner may be

open to the character and magnitude of those punishments, to which he is content to subject himself every time he sins against God. I shall be satisfied, on his being brought to understand what the portion he chooses for himself is—a suffering, void of all comfort, unmixed, unmitigated; that peculiar quality in pain, which, of all others, is the most dreadful.

2. Mercy and justice are generally known to be the two hands, with which God governs the universe. It is right then (unless we wish to make a monster for our God) that these two hands should perfectly correspond with each other. They ought both of them to be alike powerful, alike untiring, alike astounding, in their several operations. In the exercise of His mercy, God, as all will allow, has performed such actions, as far exceed our utmost belief. For, not only has He submitted patiently to endure the worst treatment from the vilest of men, showing them every imaginable favour, even when they were devising their outrages against Him; but He has gone the length of dying for them, of dying a death, so ignominious, so atrocious, and so detestable, that only to credit the thing at all is something quite scandalous and absurd in the eyes of the world. We must therefore admit that, when God comes to exercise His justice, His doings must needs be equally astounding, equally surpassing the belief of mankind. To this effect the Preacher said, "As His mercy is great, so is His correction" (Ecclus. xvi. 12); insomuch that, as when He would show forth His mercy, He acted seemingly like one, void of all sense of justice, so, when He would show forth His justice, He acted seemingly like one, void of all sense of mercy. Don't talk to me, then, about the gloomy recesses of hell, of its reeking stench, of its frightful spectres, of its various instruments of torture, such, for instance, as the swords and daggers, the wheels and arrows, the rivers of burning sulphur, the cups of melted lead, the pools of ice, the ovens and gridirons, the saws and clubs, the tools for scooping out eyes, the pincers for tearing out teeth, the excoriating combs for the body, the grinding chains for the bones, the roasting flames for the entrails, and other like numerous methods of racking torment and cruelty:

I allow every one of them to be horrible in the extreme; but, after all, they are only such kinds of punishments as the ingenuity of man could discover, and the force of man could apply. The bulls of bronze were the invention of Perillus. The seats of iron were from a design by Agathocles. The wit of the Egyptians was able to hit upon that atrocious torture of piercing the nails with sharp-pointed reeds. Nero devised a mode of dressing up men in the skins of wild beasts, and of throwing them in that state to the dogs. Mezentius invented a way of fastening men alive to dead bodies, and then of leaving them to putrefy. The vultures of Tityus, the thirst of Tantalus, the wheels of Ixion, the stones of Sisyphus, were all such penal inflictions, as suggested themselves to the minds of the Greeks. You must not then suppose any of these to be the punishments, which people will have to suffer in hell.

But then consider, if these were of so severe and formidable a character, what must be expected of those punishments, which are the peculiar invention of a GOD infinitely wise and of unlimited power; when, in His just indignation against the wicked, He will have to display His justice in the most signal manner ("pouring out His fury, great as His mercy") and will publish it abroad that, if His mercy was great in bestowing pardon, His justice will not fall short of it in exacting punishment? His punishments surely will be of a nature to exceed all the puny efforts of man in this way, and will afford us a fresh proof of the vast inequality, subsisting between the weakness of mortals and the Omnipotence of GOD. Add to this, that every sin we commit against His Divine Majesty is so highly aggravated, that no punishment can be so flagrant and so unheard of, as ever to come up to it: so that, let Him punish as much as He will, never will His justice be satisfied; it will always have some further claims. Only conceive, then, what those punishments must needs be, in the infliction of which there is no danger of any excess in severity. GOD will have to *rain His war upon them* (Job xx. 23, Vulg). If I may so speak, He must empty His quiver of its arrows, His armoury of its weapons, His arsenals of their thunders and lightnings; that He may satisfy

His justice to the full extent of His power, if not to the full desert of man's transgression. *I will accomplish My fury upon them* (Ezek. vi. 12). If these things are so, let none among you hope to find in hell any rest, any intermission of pain, any possible relief whatsoever. Nothing of the kind is there: the case does not admit of it. These truly would be the effects of a compassionate mercy, not of an implacable justice. "In hell there is no redemption, none, none: and therefore," S. Augustine adds, "in hell are sighs and groans; but there is none to shew pity: in hell are sorrows and lamentations; but there is none to hear."

3. We continually see how, in this world, some palliative has been provided for every human suffering. There is not a wound without its balm, nor a poison without its antidote. You must not, however, allow a thought to enter your mind that it is so in hell. There indeed the scalding heats are to the utmost painful; but there is no ointment to soothe them: there the thirst is raging; but there is no water to cool it: there the hunger is ravenous; but there is no food to appease it: there the sorrow is intense; but there is no sleep to put it to rest: there the feeling of shame is intolerable; but there is no veil to cover it. Were there only so much as a death in hell, capable of putting a period to such wretchedness, were there a death, a death!—But this is the worst of all for them; that they are not even allowed the hope of a remedy so dismal, so desperate, as would be that of their utter annihilation. "There is no poison of destruction in them," (Wisd. i. 14).

Mithridates, the famous King of Pontus, on finding he had no possible means of escaping slavery, except by the terrible expedient of death, madly determined to gulp it down in a cup of poison. But, in consequence of his having, by the use of his renowned antidotes, inured his stomach to digest poison, he felt no harm from what he had taken, but rather the contrary. The unhappy monarch then lamented the forlorn state, to which he had reduced himself, since only in his case death had lost its power; and he gave way to despair. But, to speak the truth, up to this point he was not so much to be pitied for his affliction, as upbraided for his cowardice.

For, had he really coveted death, could the means not have been forthcoming in a world, where every thing is capable of destroying life, and no single thing is able to preserve it? There was therefore no such necessity of his complaining that only in his case poisons were harmless. He could easily have had recourse to the javelin, and have struck it into his heart; to the knot, and have strangled his throat; to the precipice, and have dashed out his life. What sundry kinds of death did the sea, in every one of its ravenous billows, offer to his acceptance! Plunge into it, where he would, there was some Charybdis or Scylla nigh at hand, promising their friendly aid to carry him off. The whales and sea-monsters were most willing to accommodate him. Did he penetrate the recesses of the forest, on every branch he could have found a gallows. Deaths were at his service in the caverns, where the savage beasts lie down; in the furnaces, where the flames devour; in the deep pits, where the felons fly for refuge: so that, if the dastard did not dare to meet death in any other form, than that of his beloved familiar poisons, it entirely arose from the fact of his desiring such a death only, as would answer his immediate purpose, and at the same time not subject him to any pain. Do you know, *when* the wretch might with the utmost justice have complained? I will tell you—when screwing up his courage he had struck the javelin into his heart; and the javelin had given a wound, but not unto death: when strangling his throat with a knot, the knot had given him pain; but not unto death: when dashing himself against the rocks, the rocks had given him pain; but not unto death: when he had essayed to learn by his own experience the sufferings of ship-wrecked men, tossed by the raging billows, or torn by the sea-monsters; but not unto death: when the gallows, when the beasts, when the furnaces, when the pits, were all alike found capable of tormenting, but none able to put him to death. Under such circumstances, I grant that he might have complained most justly of the hardness of his lot. But this now is the very lot of condemned souls in hell. Yes; it is, it is, says the Apostle S. John—*Men shall seek death, but shall not find it* (Rev. ix. 6). This will be the task, in which

the damned will be occupied through all eternity, *seeking death*, even under all of its most revolting shapes, and never having the good fortune to find it. For ever will they be roaming in those gloomy caverns, howling and vociferating: "Death, death, where art thou?—What devil among you will be so kind, as to terminate our existence?—Ah, wretched being that I am!—Where now, will Abimelech say, is that sword, which helped me to relieve my fury (Judges ix. 54)? Where now, will King Zimri say, is my funeral pile (1 Kings xvi. 18)? And where, will Ahithophel rejoin, is my halter (2 Sam. xvii. 23)? And whence comes it, in the region of so many punishments, that none is yet able to despatch us? How is it, ye worms, that ye have not yet made an end of devouring us? How is it, ye flames, that ye have not before now succeeded in consuming us? Then seeing near them some pitchy or sulphureous lake, of an exceeding boiling heat, thither will the poor creatures run in the hope of catching their death at the bottom: but no such blessing shall they find there. *They shall not find it!* Then rendered more exasperated they will be off to seek it in another place. Hoping, peradventure to find it, where the stench is most overpowering, the blade most sharp, the millstone most ponderous, thither will they hasten, there to bury, to mangle, to pulverise themselves. But all to no purpose. *They shall not find it!* Well indeed may one among them vie with the other, who shall be the first in a chase into the dragon's open jaw; or the first to expose himself to the leopard's merciless gripe: for there they will get torture enough; yet not unto death. *He shall be punished* (to use the words of Job) *for all he did, and yet shall not be consumed* (xx. 19, Vulg.); and he shall discover that there are in hell plenty of halters for the Ahithophels, of funeral piles for the Zimris, and of swords for the Abimelechs: Death is the thing lacking; and not any common sort of death; but a death, which shall itself die and not be immortal. This truly would be a rare advantage in a place, where every kind of suffering must be everlasting, never to be terminated, either by any variation in itself, nor by any successions of time; never even to experience the shortest intermission, nor the least abatement—never, never,

never! What think you of this, my hearers? Does not the thought of it make the hair of your head bristle up in horror? "Whose heart," I will ask with holy Bonaventure, "will not be shaken," who will not fear, who will not tremble, "at the pains of hell, which are not only intolerable from their severity, but boundless from their eternity?" Never to cease from being punished! Never to cease from being punished! Who can conceive, what this must be? *Their time shall endure for ever* (Ps. lxxxi. 16, Vulg.) . . .

4. We know that, in this world of ours, even our amusements, when unreasonably prolonged, will grow irksome. We therefore place a certain limit to our feasts, a certain limit to our games, a certain limit to our comedies, a certain limit to our concerts, a certain limit to our out-of-door exercises, however much we are pleased by them at first. What then must it be to have to abide through all eternity in the same state of sufferings; of sufferings so infinite in their number, of sufferings so excruciating in their various kinds? In my summer rambles I have occasionally had the good fortune to light upon some flowery meadow, and there under the shady foliage I have reclined and reposed my weary frame; enjoying the freshness of the breeze, the whispering of the stream, and the sweet song of the nightingale. And Oh, how delicious did I find this at first! But what happened soon? Within the space of one short hour, I felt a wish to get up. Now suppose some person had then forced me to lie still in the same posture, without moving, for a whole day. Alas! all the delight I experienced would soon be turned into pain. The mere thought of what awaited me would quickly have made the song seem to be melancholy, and the whispering harsh, and the freshness unpleasant, and the shade mournful, and the flowers nothing but thorns. Oh, the misery of lost souls! What must their punishment be, when, not for a single day, but for endless ages, they must lie stretched in the same flames; the *lake which burneth with fire*, as the Apocalypse declares (xxi. 8)—a *lake*, because of its fixedness; *burning*, because of its activity—there to be always surrounded by the same scorpions, always entwined round the folds of the same serpents, always

insulted by the same demons, without the power, during all this long long period, of relieving their hearts' burden by one momentary sigh! "Nor shall it be," as S. Cyprian spake, "that these torments can have any respite or any end." Oh, what will be their fury! what their remorse! what their desperation! At the thought of the sufferings they would have to endure, how will they execrate that night, in which they were born; that bosom, that bare them; those paps, that gave them suck! *Let the day perish, wherein we were born: and let the night perish, in which we were conceived* (Job iii. 3, Vulg.)! . . .

5. One thing only might here be possibly suggested. It is this. It might prove some small comfort to them, under such tremendous evils, to have so many fellow-sufferers: from this circumstance people sometimes take occasion to say—"Well, then, if I am to go to hell, I shall not be the only person there." Oh, foolish, foolish man, what dost thou say? Thou wilt not be the only person there? So much the worse for thee. Would you then perhaps be the only person in a convent of Carthusians or Capuchins? Certainly not: you might rather have a troop of Angels there for your companions. And yet, you take no encouragement from this to go and shut yourself up in a monastery. How then can you imagine hell to prove a place so bearable, because you will not be the only person there? It cannot be denied that, in this world, we certainly do derive some alleviation of our pains from having many others to share them with us: and the reason, if I mistake not, is this; because we are more inclined to hope that we shall be supported, or at all events to be somewhat comforted and commiserated, when in the society of those, who know by their own experience what it is we are suffering. But in hell, where every one is active in doing another mischief, it is not so. There they abide, like an enormous bundle of thorns, which from the fact of their being heaped and intermixed together must needs be piercing every one his neighbour: *They be folden together as thorns*, the very comparison employed by Nahum (i. 10). And what good then can come in hell from a multitude of companions? It cannot possibly make them of any assist-

ance to each other: it can only serve to increase the misery, the closeness, the uproar, the riot, and disorder of their prison. And for these reasons how much better for thee to be alone! It is perfectly true that, in consequence of that mutual enmity, which consumes them, they would, rather of the two, have companions near them; for their delight is to curse, to devour, and to destroy. *Through the wrath of the Lord the people shall be as the fuel of the fire:* yet still, as Isaiah speaks, *No man shall spare his brother* (ix. 19, 20, Vulg.) *Each shall eat the flesh of his left arm;* which is tantamount to saying, as in the context, *Manasses against Ephraim and Ephraim against Manasses.* What then? Why, this enmity between them, if we carefully consider the matter, can only serve, after all, to heighten their misery; it cannot procure them the slightest comfort; because the intense hatred, they have against each other, inclines them to regard the very worst injury they can inflict, as falling far short of what they fain would do, had they the power. Hence the prophet adds, speaking of them individually, *And he shall snatch on the right hand and be hungry; and he shall eat on the left hand and they shall not be satisfied.*[1]

6. Now, if the hatred, shown by one lost soul against another be such, as to exclude all comfort from among them, I leave you to judge of the effects of that hatred, borne by them all in common against the devils, who are the chief causes of their sufferings. Oh, the dreadful thing! The poor wretches will take notice how they, who once were so crafty and treacherous in tempting them, will henceforth be

[1] It is to be much regretted that the eloquent preacher, in dealing with a subject so awfully mysterious as the nature and eternity of future punishments, should have passed by the plain declarations of CHRIST and His Apostles—the true foundation, on which our belief in this doctrine is founded—and have had recourse instead to texts from the Old Testament, to say the least of them, of very questionable application, and to passages from the Apocrypha of no authority with us at all. The translator has, therefore, found it necessary to many considerable omissions in this sermon; and perhaps some of his readers would have wished for a greater number: but he has been deterred from this by a conviction, possibly mistaken, that the tendency of men's minds at the present day is to rest too much on the infinite mercy of the ALMIGHTY, and by an undue and even presumptuous reliance upon it to make "the terror of the LORD" of no effect.

so savage and relentless in tormenting them: and, on finding themselves thus cruelly betrayed, only think how they will curse them: only conceive, whether they will be able to tolerate their presence, or the sound of their names. Nevertheless, as Job said, every one of the reprobates must endure the sight of these his betrayers, as they will continually haunt and rush about him. *The terrible ones shall go and come upon him* (xx. 25, Vulg.) He must hear himself everlastingly reviled with their tongues, and behold himself mangled with their talons; and, all the while, have no power whatever to take revenge: forasmuch as the demons will be the executioners of the condemned man, and in no wise the condemned man the executioner of the demons.

7. But even this does not appear to me in the light of an evil so very inconsolable, by reason of one far greater, which I will mention. The devils too must take their punishments; and, although the condemned cannot have a hand in punishing them, yet their rage against them will be somewhat relieved by being allowed to witness what they suffer. What then shall we say of their rage against the Blessed, which admits of no such relief? This will indeed cause them an anguish of soul so intense, so profound, so indescribable, as to make them rave, like madmen. They will lift up their eyes to the Empyrean; and, when they see at what a very trifling cost others got possessed of that happiness, themselves had just forfeited, how will they mourn and groan from their innermost souls!

Joseph's brethren, on perceiving him to be his father's favourite, conceived such envy against him, innocent as he was, that they were at once for killing him. *Come, let us kill him.* And yet what were the superior favours, which Joseph had received? A garment more beautiful, a smile more endearing, a kiss more affectionate. How then will it fare with the condemned, on their perceiving, not one of their brethren, but perhaps their rival, their enemy, the very person, whom they had once so much despised, as a pauper, or so ridiculed, as an idiot, or so trampled on, as a slave,—on their perceiving, I say, such a person as this, elevated above them to the immediate presence of GOD? This, in my

opinion, will carry them into such a transport of fury, that, were the choice allowed them between these two things; either, that they should go up to feast with the Blessed, or, that the Blessed should come down to suffer with them; they would prefer seeing the Blessed in hell, rather than themselves in Heaven. This, I confess, is a most monstrous state of mind; but it is not incredible to him, who knows what are the goadings of envy. Far more easily endured were the stone quarries of Syracuse and the dungeons of Agrigentum; since, as S. Cyprian observed, other evils are of a nature to admit some comfort, whereas envy is inconsolable. "Hating a man for his happiness is an incurable evil." Hence, you observe, when GOD designed visiting Eli with a punishment, proportioned to the sins of his disorderly sons, what did He threaten? That He would strip him of his wealth? That He would cut off his family? That He would make his house a desolation? This was not the main point, on which He laid the chief stress. What was it then? That He would make him see a rival in the Temple, one exalted there to the highest honour. *Thou shalt see thy rival in the Temple, in all the prosperity of Israel* (1 Sam. ii. 32, Vulg.). In like manner, what else was that mighty grief, which burst forth in the howlings of an Esau, or which drove Saul to desperation, but the conviction they both had of their inability to prevent the happiness, which their enemies were destined to enjoy?

But we need not go out of our way for examples. Let us fix our thoughts on the glutton in the text. Let us seriously inquire, why it was, that, when in the midst of the flames he desired a refreshing drop of water, his request was that Lazarus should be sent to him with it. *Send Lazarus.* Would it not surely have been more consistent in him to ask, as a favour, to be himself conveyed to the spot, where Lazarus was so happy, rather than that Lazarus should come to the place, where he was so miserable? Why break in upon the calm repose Lazarus was enjoying in the gentle bosom of Abraham? Why disturb him? Why displace him? Why trouble him? Wonder not at this, replies Peter Chrysologus; the request of this miserable man arises not from any

new torment he feels, but from his old rancour. "He suffers more from his own rage than he does from hell." His envy devours him much more than does the fire. He cannot bear to see the person, whom he once treated with less consideration, than his own dogs, now so highly exalted: and therefore you may be quite certain, that he was not now so anxious to procure for himself a drop of water from Lazarus, as he burned with intense desire to do Lazarus some mischief. "Men feel it to be very grievous, and like a flame past endurance raging within them, to see those happy whom they here despised: hence it was, that the glutton did not wish to be conveyed to Lazarus, but that Lazarus should be sent to him." And here I picture to myself, that, if he could have possibly managed to get him into his clutches, he would have sprung at him with all the fury of a bloodhound or of a savage bull. In return for a drop of water, this ingrate would have disgorged into his face oceans of fire, blazing forth from his own entrails; and, as far as it could be done, he would have impregnated his whole body, his joints, veins, bones, and marrow, with the hell he carried about in his own person. But there is no hurry: he will have time enough to writhe and to bellow, as some relief to his torments: for gluttons are not allowed to ascend to the kingdoms, prepared for Lazaruses; nor are Lazaruses allowed to descend to the caverns peopled by gluttons. *A great gulf is fixed.* How then must the very hearts of the condemned burst with agony, when they see, that, in spite of all their yelling and all their desperate rage, their rival will be eternally happy; that from henceforth they will never be able to cause him the least annoyance, never be able to ruffle any one of his enjoyments, never be able to rob him of a single hair of his head. If this be not that canker, which gnaws into the very bones, what can it be? *Envy is the rottenness of the bones* (Prov. xiv. 30).

8. And yet this would be trifling, did they not also see how the heavens, instead of coming to their relief, were feasting over their calamities; that not only holy men, not only holy women, not only all the Angels, but even God Himself was laughing at them, turning them into ridicule,

and deriving a manifest pleasure on His exalted Throne from their misery.[1] *The Lord shall have them in derision* (Ps. ii. 4.) These are the words of the Psalmist; and GOD Himself affirms by Ezekiel, *I will also applaud with My hands together, and I will satisfy My fury against them* (xxi. 17.) You cannot more sensibly annoy a gambler, who has lost his money at play, than by laughing at him in the midst of his groans. This is quite enough to make him launch out in a transport of passion against the dice, the cards, the table, since he cannot vent his rage against the winner. Only conceive then what will be the inward pangs of the reprobate, when, while they are mourning at their enemies' prosperity, those enemies are making merry at their adversity. I look upon this, as really being the crown of all their sufferings. . . . We may suppose them saying—"Oh, most hard-hearted GOD, why not exterminate us with Thy thunder-bolts, rather than insult us with Thy derision? Lay on our flames two-fold, Thou cruel one; madden them into the utmost fury! Cease only from all such pleasure in our sufferings. Ah, this derision of Thine is more bitter to us than our own tears! Thy joy is more fatal to us than all our miseries. Why has not our place in hell some more profound abyss, where we might find shelter from a GOD, who derides? The man deceived us, who said, that our sorest pain would arise from our having to behold the face of an angry GOD. A deriding GOD! a deriding GOD! This is what he should have told us. Oh,

[1] This passage, which in the eyes of many may seem to be irreconcilable with any just views of the Divine mercy and goodness, has been retained in the translation because its main truth is plainly warranted by Scripture: "*I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock, when your fear cometh*" (Prov. i. 26)—a dreadful expression, relating, beyond all doubt, to the miserable state of the finally impenitent despiser of that very goodness, which it is supposed to impugn. Still, when the ALMIGHTY condescends, on such awful occasions, to "speak as a man," there is always a danger of our interpreting His words by the rule of human bad passions, and thereby of degrading His Divine attributes and perfections; and this danger may be the greatest, when matters of such tremendous import are left to the warmth of an Italian imagination, or to a strong desire of producing oratorical effect, and an impression at the time, though it be far from the preacher's intention to over-state or misrepresent the truth. It is remarkable that Roman Catholic and Puritan divines most offend in this way: thus extremes meet.

that, to screen us from such a sight, the mountains would fall flat on our heads, or the earth sink under our feet! Where then are those dense obscurities in hell, promised to us, as being the people, *to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever* (Jude 13)? Where are those depths of horror, that gloom so intense? Woe unto us, who have eyes to behold what torments us, who are blind to every object, save the one, which we would not see!" Thus will these poor wretches have to say: and being unable, like infuriated giants, to wage war against heaven, they must needs rage against themselves, *gnawing their tongues for pain*, as we read in the Revelation (xvi. 10): they must devour their own flesh, rend their hair, mangle their faces, and perhaps even desperately drive their fingers into the sockets of their eyes, as if to exclude the sight of Him, who with a simple smile can so mightily afflict them . . . . Rightly will they conclude that all hope is for ever gone of their obtaining the slightest relief, so long as GOD Himself is so far from showing them the least sympathy, as to deride them. And of this they can be under no doubt. *As the Lord rejoiced over you to do you good*—such is the denunciation, made by the mouth of Moses against all reprobate sinners, as represented by the unhappy Israelites—*As the Lord rejoiced over you to do you good and to multiply you, so the Lord will rejoice over you to destroy you and to bring you to nought* (Deut. xxviii. 63). And here you have that profound misery which I had in contemplation, on our visiting this morning the prison-house of hell. Are you now of opinion that any comfort is to be found there? None, none. Not without the utmost reason is it entitled *the place of torment*: for torments are here centralized; there is nothing but unmixed pain, unmixed punishment. And now let us shut the dungeon-door; and, having quickly returned the keys by the hand of an Angel, let us conclude with the words of Emissenus, who shuddered, while he uttered them; "Woe, woe, woe to those, who are to experience these things, before they will believe them!" Woe to him, who prefers making a trial of so sad a destiny, rather than at once believe it!

The Second Part.

9. Having heard what those punishments are, which lost souls will have to undergo, you will surely think that it is every one's business to do his best to avoid them. For, if Ahab no sooner heard the prophet Elijah, threatening him with far less evils, than in a panic of fear he at once rent his garments, albeit of fine purple, put sackcloth on his flesh, sprinkled himself with ashes, and chastened himself with fasting (1 Kings xxi. 27), what must those persons do, who have heard me threatening them with calamities so far more tremendous? Certainly they ought all to return home in tears, to seek to be alone, to seclude themselves for a season from the world. And yet, I tell you, there is scarcely one of their number, who is not doing his best to incur this very condemnation. How many profess themselves willing to go to hell, rather than to give up that impure connection, in which they indulge! How many choose hell, rather than be reconciled to their enemy, or rather than restore their neighbour's stolen property, or that female her injured reputation! How very numerous are such persons! Heard ye not Christ, when He expressly affirmed, that *Broad is the way and wide is the gate that leadeth unto destruction* (S. Matt. vii. 13)? Who can explain to us what vast numbers there are, who are continually flocking to perdition? . . . *Hell hath enlarged herself and opened her mouth without measure* (Isa. v. 14). What jaws have we here! How measureless, how boundless! And yet they have need to be *enlarged.* Who then can count the multitudes, whom they daily devour?—*without measure, without measure!*

10. What then, after all, have I this morning to do, but pour forth two copious streams of inconsolable grief for the many souls, who see hell open before them, and yet do not draw back, but boldly press on to launch themselves into its flames? Ah, no: stop, ye wretched beings, for a moment; stop—and, before plunging with a headlong leap into that abyss, let me demand of you in the words of the same Isaiah —*Which of you can dwell with the devouring fire? Which of*

you can dwell with everlasting burnings (xxxiii. 14, Vulg.)? Excuse me, my people. For this once, you are not to leave the Church, unless you have first made a satisfactory reply to my demand—*Which of you can dwell with everlasting burnings?* What sayest thou, O Lady, who art so tender in cherishing thy flesh?—Canst thou *dwell with everlasting burnings?* Now thou canst not bear it, should the point of a needle at thy work lightly stain thy delicate skin. How thinkest thou then? Wilt thou be able to endure those terrific engines, by which thou must feel thyself dismembered, disjointed, and with an everlasting butchery crushed into powder? What sayest thou, O man, who art so intent on providing for thy personal comforts?—Canst thou *dwell with everlasting burnings?* Now thou canst not tolerate the breath of a poor man, who by coming near thee in the least offends thy organs of smell. Wilt thou be able to stand these foul stenches, by which thou must feel thyself poisoned, stifled, and with an everlasting suffocation pressed down to the ground? And thou, what sayest thou, for thyself, O Priest, who art so negligent in the discharge of thy duties?—Canst thou *dwell with everlasting burnings?* Now thou art not able to remain in the choir of thy Church a single hour without looking indecently about thee, without being restless, without indulging thy tongue in every kind of gossip. How then does it strike thee? Wilt thou be able to remain through all the ages of Eternity, I say not, reclining on thy elegantly carved stall, but rather stretched out on an iron frame-work, on a bed of flames, there to be listening to the demon's howls ringing in thy ears? What sayest thou, O glutton? What sayest thou, O slanderer? What sayest thou, O libertine?—thou young man, luxuriating so wantonly in all thy heart's desires?—Canst thou *dwell with everlasting burnings?* Alas! who, who among us can? And yet, why do I thus enlarge on the case of other people? Excuse me: of myself, of myself I ought to speak; of myself, an Ecclesiastic it is true, as cannot be denied from my dress, and yet a wretched creature, so unmortified, so head-strong, so vain, so averse to that true penitence, which my sins demand of me! If I am not able to remain for a short time before the presence of my LORD

in tears for my sins, if I am so fond of my own ease, if I am so studious of my own reputation, how can I hereafter, wretch that I am, stand fixed for ever and ever at the feet of Lucifer,[1] the place assigned to such as myself, to such, as having undertaken to confer benefits on other men and been gifted accordingly for that purpose with so much light and knowledge, and so many endowments, have betrayed my vow by my actions? Ah, LORD, have pity, have pity. We have sinned; we know it; we confess it. "We have done ungodly, we have dealt unrighteously in all thy ordinances" (Baruch ii. 12). And therefore we cannot make bold to ask Thee *not* to punish us. Punish us, then, since we well deserve it. *Reward the proud after their deserving* (Ps. xciv. 2). Only, in Thine infinite mercy, may it please Thee not to sentence our souls to hell. O hell, O hell, the mere mention of thee is enough to overwhelm us with horror! This is the punishment, from which, not for our merit's sake, but for the sake of Thy agony, for the sake of Thy bloody sweat, we entreat Thee to deliver us. *O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in Thine anger, lest Thou bring me to nothing* (Jer. x. 24). Behold us willing to suffer in this life the worst it may please Thee to bring upon us. Here, put us to pain; here, chastise us; here, lay Thy rod upon us: "Consume us here, cut us to pieces here; only spare us in Eternity" (S. Augustine)! Send us poverty now; that we may be spared in Eternity. Send us reproach now; that we may be spared in Eternity. Send us sickness now; that we may be spared in Eternity. Send us just as many evils, as may please Thee, in this world, provided we be spared for ever in the world to come—that we may be spared in Eternity! that we may be spared in Eternity.

[1] It is very probable that the Inferno of Dante furnished the key to many Italian preachers in their too daring pictures and personifications of the torments of hell. Here there is an evident reference to the last Canto in the Inferno, where the most terrible punishment of treachery, exemplified in *Lucifer* and Judas, is reserved for the lowest depths of hell. The mention of the particular names of devils (S. vi.) will remind the Italian reader of that remarkable Canto, the 21st; and the picture of Dives, vomiting seas of fire upon Lazarus, and labouring to infuse into him that hell he carried about with him in his own person (S. vii. near the close), may serve to recall that monstrous transformation, described in Canto the 25th.

And what, my brethren, have we meanwhile to do, to obtain from our offended Lord so great a favour? In this there is no difficulty. I can tell you at once. We must Repent! We must Repent! This is the thing required. Place a check upon your love of pleasure. Put an end to your lasciviousness. Prostrate yourselves before God, confessing your sins: wipe them out with the tears of a contrite heart. Turn to the Lord in fasting. *Break off your sins by righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor* (Dan. iv. 27). . . . And do Thou, O Lord, graciously behold these Thy servants, who turn unto Thee, and now implore of Thee mercy and forgiveness. Cause that flood of godly sorrow, which in rapid torrents is beginning to gush from their eyes, to increase. Hear their prayers; accept their supplications; and condescend to give us an illustrious proof hereby that Thou hast indeed placed before men the water and the fire—"He hath set fire and water before thee" (Ecclus. xv. 17).—And what, therefore, now can remain, but that every one among you should determine on his choice between the two? Stretch forth thy hand to one or the other, as thou wilt. Either lament with penitent sinners for a short time here—Behold "the water!" or, burn with condemned sinners hereafter for ever and ever—Behold "the fire!"

SERMON XV.

ON THE DISREGARD OF GOD'S THREATENINGS.

S. Matt. xxi. 41.

"He will miserably destroy those wicked men."[1]

1. And it is then to denounce punishment upon a city, so deserving the utmost prosperity, that I have now ascended this pulpit? Ah, no; my Lord! If it be Thy wish that I also should serve Thee, like another Jonah, send me to some Nineveh, to some impious, to some profane cities: for thither I will gladly hasten; doubt Thou not of my there proclaiming every kind of extermination, that is most terrible, according to Thy good pleasure. But, since Thou hast brought me here to a Catholic city, how else wouldest Thou have me greet it, than with prosperous omens, with tidings of long life, of fruitful seasons, of harvests full of joy? Yet, who is there to certify me of this? I cannot but notice how

[1] The rendering of this text in the Vulgate is more literal, than that of our authorized version. *Malos malè perdet. He will miserably destroy those miserable men.* This gives the force of the original. On the contrary, the text of the preceding Sermon (S. Luke xvi. 22) is more correctly translated in our Bible, than in the Vulgate; where we read, *Mortuus est Dives, et sepultus est in inferno: The rich man died, and he was buried in hell.* By this rendering we entirely lose the fine moral, conveyed by the particular mention of the *funeral* of Dives, whom we may suppose to have been pompously attended to his grave and to have had all this world could give him, and far more than his poor body could need; but no spiritual blessing, no portion in another world; whereas "the beggar died, and *was carried by the Angels into Abraham's bosom.*"

wickedness is here increasing on every side, gaining ground, and getting the mastery: and therefore, O my Pisa, I am afraid lest even in thee it should reach such a head, as to provoke the Divine displeasure against thee to thine infinite harm. However this may be, here is the positive denunciation, which I have it in command of God unreservedly to set before thee—*He will miserably destroy those wicked men.* No regard is paid to ancient family; none to ancestral virtue. The wicked man, whoever he be, must sooner or later bear the penalty of his sins. Did any city ever appear more lovely in the sight of God, than Jerusalem? God, for His own good pleasure, had planted it on the most charming heights of Palestine. He had hedged it around with His law; He had walled it in with His guardian protection; He had cleared it of the thorny brushwood, which choked it—the Canaanites, the Ammonites, the Amorites, and others, its like troublesome neighbours. There He had erected His Temple to stand, as the tower; there He had appointed His Altar to be the wine-press; there He had lavished all that was costly in value, and beautiful in art. *What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done to it?* (Isa. v. 4). And yet, what is become of it now? Go and look upon it. It is altogether become desolate! And what caused the desolation? This wretched city would not believe the warning of to-day's Gospel: *He will miserably destroy those wicked men.* Why all these threatenings? Why all these threatenings? *This evil shall not come upon us* (Jer. v. 12; Amos ix. 10)! Such was the very language used by the incredulous Jews from the time of Jeremiah; *The prophets have spoken in the wind* (Jer. v. 13, Vulg.) These preachers have a mind to frighten us: "Come, let us enjoy life and pleasant society; come, let us be merry." Ah, ye Jews, most obstinate of men, *Shall not My soul be avenged on such a nation as this* (v. 29)? Allow but a little more time to the wrath of God, and then you will see. But why, my hearers, do we not avail ourselves, in the interval, of such a warning for our own admonition? Is it, perhaps, that here, in a Christian land, no one is to be found who holds God in contempt, as if He were unable to avenge Himself—no one,

whose common talk is, *This evil shall not come upon us, this evil shall not come upon us?* I have, therefore, determined this morning to put these unbelievers to shame; and, speaking in the Name of an offended GOD, to show them, that, if they will not, now in time, credit His thunders, they will, ere long, have to feel the stroke of His lightning.

2. In those most alarming threats, which GOD has constantly hurled over the heads of sinners, we have, I think, the most signal of all proofs of His infinite mercy. What else did He ever design by them, than to afford those very sinners the time to make their escape? That man has no wish to strike, who is so careful, long before he strikes, to threaten. For, as one has shrewdly observed, a threatening acts like a shield; it provides us the opportunity, either of taking to our heels in good time, or of assuming an attitude of self-defence. Hence S. Augustine asserted, that "If our GOD wished to punish us, He would not, so many centuries ago, have given us warning." He, who points out to us, long long before, the means of escaping, must, in a certain sense, chastise us against His will. He has no desire to strike thee, who first cries aloud in thy ears, "Take heed." Accordingly, the holy man argues: if GOD took a delight in our punishment, He would not send His thunder to precede His lightning; but would at once send the lightning first. And yet, we can scarcely read of His having inflicted any judgment on the world, without having threatened it before; not only in general terms, but distinctly too: this being one of the chief reasons, why at different times He despatched different prophets to His people. Attend to this. He wished to denounce the entire spoliation of their property, and what did He? He made Isaiah walk through the city stripped of his clothes (xx. 2). He wished to denounce the sad captivity of their families. And what did He? He made Jeremiah walk through their city laden with chains (xxvii. 2). In like manner He would denounce against them a most terrible famine; already, indeed, hanging over the besieged: and for this purpose He made Ezekiel lie upon his side, in the same position, for three hundred and ninety days; during which time he was to eat nothing but the vilest food, prepared in

a most disgusting manner (iv. 8, 12). In a similar way He went on foretelling His intended judgments under divers signs, which were all a simple premonition to His people that they should be on their guard, bewail their misdeeds, reform their lives, and flee from the wrath of His countenance. It was this, that suggested to holy David, in his meditation thereon, that fervent ejaculation—*Thou hast given a token to them that fear, that they may flee from before the bow, so that Thy beloved may be delivered* (Ps. lix. 6, Vulg.)

And yet, who would have imagined such a thing? God could not, notwithstanding all these assurances, prevail upon men to believe Him. Indeed the more pains He took in repeating His threatening, that He would *miserably destroy the wicked*, the more they contrived to provoke Him; just as if this false maxim had been deeply rooted in their minds, "Except I see, I will not believe." (S. John xx. 25.) And what, dear Christians, was the effect of such incredulity? Why, it forced God to execute those same punishments, which He had threatened for the very purpose that He might never have to execute them? This was that incredulity, which plunged a licentious world in a deluge of waters, when it would not believe Noah, who announced it. This it was that invoked upon the wicked Sodomites cataracts of fire, when they laughed at the speech of Lot, who predicted it. This it was, that involved the stubborn Egyptians in the shipwreck of the Red Sea, when they hardened themselves against those miraculous signs from heaven, which preceded it. This it was, that doomed so many Israelites in the wilderness to death, when they despised the remonstrances of Moses, who foretold it. This it was, that sealed the fate of the vanquished Assyrians at Bethulia, when they scorned the plain speaking of Achior, who denounced it. And God in mercy grant, my hearers, that this same incredulity may not prove the cause, why so many tribulations are now breeding among ourselves, and subjecting us to the lash of so many scourges. "Eh!" we cry out, "all this alarm is premature! *The evil shall not come upon us, the evil shall not come upon us.*" Is it so? And what ocular proof, O sinner, wouldest thou have to convince thee that the God, who sitteth in the

Heavens, as on a throne, has not eyes to gaze on thy wickedness, a heart to resent it, an arm to punish it? Dost thou then desire to have an ocular proof of His actually inflicting, as well as verbally denouncing the punishment? Have it, then. I wish for nothing so much. Nor would I refer for your conviction to other ages: I would have you only consider well our own; since present objects impress the mind far more than objects, which have passed by.

3. Tell me, has not God in this very age, wherein our lot is cast, given us the most undeniable proof that His threatenings are not fallible, as thou dost suppose; but infallible, as thou wouldest not have them be? Shall not *the evil come upon us?* And hast thou then no eyes in thine head to behold so many rivers of blood, so many heaps of bones, so many piles of dead bodies? Thou hast but to traverse a small portion of the globe, and they will stare thee in the face. What deep tracks have the ravages of war on every side left behind them! Throughout bleeding Europe, is there a kingdom, a province, a principality, or a city to be found, which has not heard resounding over its walls the roll of the drums, the blast of the trumpet, the roar of the artillery, in our own time? Neither Italy, nor Spain, nor France, nor Germany, nor Flanders, nor England have been permitted anywhere to enjoy calm repose, or freedom from the apprehension of danger. How many souls, thinkest thou, have been carried off in these wide-spread calamities? Who can number them? To speak only of the capture of Ostend, with which the war commenced early in this century; it cost no less than eighty thousand human beings, immolated to the shrine of Death in deepest woe. Judge only from this one fact, as to the sum total of the havock, committed in other parts, where the factions were so many, people's animosities so heated, and during so long a period of time.

But why should I mention facts remote from our knowledge, when we can refer to what is going on before our eyes? How many estates do we behold, once so lovely, and now laid waste! How many lands, once so fertile, and now burnt up! How many villages, once so populous, and now de-

serted! How many cities, once so prosperous, and now in ruins![1] And what are these, but the very execution of the threatenings, which GOD has denounced? *If ye shall despise My statutes . . . . I will draw out a sword after you, and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste* (Jer. xxvi. 15, 33.) O wretched man, what dost thou say? *The evil shall not come upon us!* Only open thine eyes to confute thyself: only look at the popular insurrections of so remarkable a character, which within so few years have occurred, breaking out continually, now in Germany, now in Portugal, now in England, now in Paris, now in Naples, now in Poland. In consequence of these, one person finds his property confiscated; one is stripped of his dignities; one loses his freedom; one has his palace levelled with the ground; one his life shortened; one his name for ever degraded. Where, in any other age, do we read of more angry contentions, more frequent conspiracies, more violent treacheries, more reckless spoliations, more desperate cruelties? Here in Italy, perhaps, we have shared but little in such calamities; although the ravages of Monserrato, the desolations of Mantua, and the deplorable troubles of Turin must long be remembered. But let any one pass our frontiers, and contemplate the miseries, which heathens have inflicted upon Christians in other places, and, what is still worse, which even Christians have inflicted upon their brethren; and will he not shudder at the spectacle before him? What would he say on recognizing the traces, still stamped upon the soil of Poland, of full three hundred thousand soldiers, made up of Turks and Tartars, under the conduct of the Sultan? And yet, these same Poles have since

[1] As we had an opportunity in the preceding Sermon of noticing a few passages, which savoured of the mind of Dante, so in this we find some marked traces of the style and almost language of Segneri's great Italian master, Boccaccio. In the splendid account given by the latter of the plague at Florence in 1348, he thus expresses himself:—"*O, quanti gran palagi, quante belle case, quanti nobili abituri, per addietro di famiglie pieni, di Signori, e di Donne, infino a menomo fante rimasero voti! O, quante memorabili schiatte, quante amplissime eredità, quante famose ricchezze, si videro senza successor debito rimanere! Quanti valorosi uomini, quante belle donne, quanti leggiadri giovani, li quali, non che altri, ma Galieno, Ippocrate, o Esculapio avrieno giudicati sanissimi, la mattina desinarono co' loro parenti compagni ed amici, che poi la sera vegnente appresso nell' altro mondo cenarono con li loro passati!*"

shown a hostile spirit against their own countrymen, more bitter than that of the very Turks and Tartars; not to mention the insolent rebellious Cossacks. Unhappy Germany! Still may be seen in the very heart of thy land the smouldering embers of that huge conflagration, which Gustavus, thy victorious foe, lighted up within thee, when in his furious career, swift and blasting as the lightning, he dashed through thy provinces and quickly made himself master of Erbipolis, Bamberg, Mayence, Augsburg, and nearly all Franconia, Suevia, and the Palatinate. How eager also was the Turk, having got possession of Varadino, Nitria, and Navarino, with so large a portion of Hungary, to push further his conquests over our prostrate Christendom, and to load his miserable prisoners with chains. It is with this object that he is ever on the alert to do us some mischief; now on our seas, now in our harbours, now in our very territory. And what, if, succumbing at last to his barbarous yoke, Candia could manage to tell us her full tale of woe, without its being swallowed up, in the passage, by the noisy breakers, which beat against her coasts, would it not wring tears from our eyes? Is there an age, that has ever witnessed—I say not so many Princes, reduced to beggary and slavery; nor do I say so many Princes, made prisoners or outlawed (for of this we have now quite common examples)—but, I say, that has witnessed a Monarch of a most ancient lineage, for such was the King of England, publicly put to death upon the scaffold, by course of law, under a sentence of his own subjects, the usurpers of an authority no longer recognized in the world? *Shall not the evil come upon us?* How so? Was then the person, who escaped the sword, able to save himself from the famine? So far from it, I can exclaim with Jeremiah, *If I go forth into the field, there behold the slain with the sword; and if I enter into the city, there behold them, that are sick with famine* (xiv. 18.) Let the numerous families uprooted in every city, in consequence of such heavy and prolonged calamities, let the many depopulated districts, let the many troops of beggars now speak. And were not these miseries quite enough in themselves, unless the Heavens must also conspire to heighten them by sending down a scarcity? Only a few

years ago, it happened at Buda, a city in Hungary, that, instead of water, it rained lead; as if literally to verify that threatening; *Thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron* (Deut. xxviii. 23). In our own country, however, it was not so; for with us, as by a different mode of punishment, scarcity is almost invariably preceded by terrible floods; in consequence of which, we behold the lower classes utterly destitute, disabled from work, pining away with starvation. I happened myself to be at the Imperial city at a time, when the poor mendicants were every day dying in the streets, some benumbed with cold, others fainting for want of food; the number of cases demanding relief far exceeding that of the persons, however many, who came to relieve them. Conceive then what must have been the sufferings in those districts, villages and hamlets, where, the demand being quite as great, the supply was so much less. Was not that menace then seen to be clearly put in force; *The Lord shall smite thee with want and with cold* (Deut. xxviii. 22, Vulg.): *The people shall be cast out into the streets because of the famine* (Jer. xiv. 16)? Do you then say, *The evil shall not come upon us?* Oh, what blindness in choosing to shut your eyes to the plagues, the sicknesses, the deaths so prevalent throughout all Europe! Even now, while I am speaking, could any one pass through it, he would find mothers, whose voices were still hoarse from their recent lamentation over their children; and weeping brides with their hair still in disorder, fresh from the graves of their husbands. Oh, how frightful it has been to see cities once so fair, so happy, so populous, suddenly overrun with filth, misery, and desolation! Turn thine eye in any direction it pleased thee, there wouldest thou see the sick bereft of hope, the dying bereft of consolation. Every day did the cart with its load of dead bodies traverse the streets of the city, as though it had been the triumphal car and procession of Death, become now more rampant, as he looked more pallid and ghastly. Every house was alike prepared with its dismal contribution, to be let down from the windows. Here they presented friends; here, masters; here, wives; here, sisters; here, fathers; with a dread misgiving probably in their own minds,

lest they themselves might not have in the evening to follow the persons, whom they had started in the same morning. But, were you to inquire of me the precise spot, where the plague, in our time, obtained its greatest victories, I must direct you first to Sicily, from whence it set out; and then bid you trace it throughout the whole of our Italy, whose apportionment, in the shape of food for so ravenous a monster, is estimated in our own day at no less than a million corpses! From Italy I should conduct you to France, to Spain, to Dalmatia, to Candia, and, besides these, to England, to Poland, to Corsica, to Sardinia, to Catalonia, places, which retained for many years after the vestiges of such an immense mortality; just as the number of wrecks will attest the violence of the recent storm. And what is this, but a clear accomplishment of those appalling denunciations, *The Lord will make thy plagues wonderful, even great plagues and of long continuance, and sore sicknesses and of long continuance* (Deut. xxviii. 59)?

What hast thou to say in reply? Still dost thou cling to thy incredulous notion—*The evil shall not come upon us?* What further proof dost thou require that GOD will *miserably destroy the wicked?* Wouldst thou see the lands sucked down beneath by the waters? Ask then Flanders to shew them. Wouldst thou see the fields eaten up by the flames? Request then Naples to shew them. Wouldst thou see the people buried alive by the earthquakes? Apply then to Calabria to shew them. Oh, the hideous sights, that have been displayed in these parts of the world, to be the wonder of future ages! Dark murky clouds of smoke, prodigious showers of ashes, rattling hail of stones, slimy torrents of sulphur, boiling streams of fire, houses suddenly tumbled head-long, cattle frightfully engorged under the earth! And yet, why do I mention cattle only? I might speak of entire communities of people; for the earth every time that, after rapid intervals, like one famished with hunger, she opened her jaws, swallowed down human beings at the rate of thousands! Or, are not the horrid ravages of death at Ragusi and Rimini still fresh in your recollection? Their inhabitants, only a few years ago, at this very season of Lent, had not the least suspicion of the evil, which soon overtook them.

They were pursuing their business and pleasure. They looked forward to their happy Easter, just as we are now expecting to celebrate our's. Nevertheless, what a mournful Easter was it to them both! Even now may be heard their cries and shrieks, when the poor sufferers, unable to find any spot of ground willing to support them, fled from their houses to the fields, and from the fields back again to their houses—under their feet, the earthquake—close upon their rear, death—full before their face, the grave. And in the deadly panic of this people do we not most distinctly see how that Divine warning came true to the letter—*Thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have no assurance of thy life. In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart, wherewith thou shalt fear* (Deut. xxviii. 66, 67)? Now go; yes, go now, and in thy confident boasting say—*The evil shall not come upon us! The evil shall not come upon us!*

4. But how foolish I have been in giving myself all this trouble, to put to shame the incredulity of mankind! Why, a person must be stone-blind not to see such unheard of judgments, as are every day overtaking us. And therefore, my brethren, I feel confident that I mistook the case, when I said, that men will not believe, until they see. I should rather have said that, although they see, yet will they not believe. And this is the very extreme of incredulity, according to the saying of Jeremiah, *Thou hast stricken them, yet they would not believe* (v. 3, Vulg.); as if he had said—See the way of sinners! So long as they hear the thunder only of the threatenings, they joke at it, they say that they will not believe it true, unless they see it: and afterwards, when they feel the lightning, the very stroke of the chastisement upon them, they harden themselves in a perverse determination that, although they see, yet they will not believe it. *Thou hast stricken them, yet they would not believe!* But, holy prophet, how is this to be reconciled? Have they not the rod staring them in their faces? Do they not touch it? Do they not handle it? Do they not taste it? How is it, then, that they don't believe it? I will tell you. *They have belied the Lord, and said, it is not He* (Jer. v. 12). Certainly they believe it to be a rod, and a

terrible rod too: but they do not believe it is the "rod of the LORD." They do not believe that it is GOD, who sends these wars, these famines, these pestilences, these floods, these conflagrations, these hurricanes, these earthquakes, against them. *They have belied the Lord, and said, It is not He.* Now, give me your attention. Did not Pharaoh, with his own eyes, see most clearly all those judgments, as they successively burst over his head—the darkness, depriving him of day, the hail, stripping bare his trees, the locusts, devouring his crops, the diseases, rankling among his people, the plagues, eating up his cattle? Unquestionably, he must have seen them all. And yet what pains did he take not to give his assent to the avowal, made by his own courtiers, *This is the finger of God* (Ex. viii. 19)! He summoned a council of his most famous magicians, in order to decide whether these prodigies might not be referred to some other power, be it even the power of the devil. He turned all his inquiries and speculations this way. He contrived means, by which the magicians, too, should exhibit a like power, by changing rods into serpents, staining water with blood, enlisting frogs out of the river, and mustering flies in the air. But, when he saw that they confessed themselves to be likewise fairly beaten in the attempt, did he, on this account surrender, give up the point, and declare himself satisfied? On the contrary, he still went on persisting that the prodigies were wrought by the skill Moses had in witchcraft; so great is the repugnance sinners have for acknowledging, that GOD is the sole Author of all they suffer. Now mind; I don't assert that Christians ordinarily are so stupid, as Pharaoh was: this would be going too far: still, with what difficulty are even Christians brought in their afflictions to acknowledge the hand, that smites them. You cannot be strangers to this fact. Does a hungry wolf get into your fold to devour your flock? You attribute it to the negligence of the keeper. Does a raging fire seize upon your fields to burn up the corn? You lay the blame on the spite of your neighbours. Does a slow fever settle in your body to undermine your constitution? You account for it by some ignorance in your doctor. The origin of almost every war in the world is traced either to the ambitious aim of princes to

extend their dominions, or to the anxious wish of vassals to get their servitude abridged. To the soldiers' unruliness is imputed the waste of the country and the plunder of the town; to the commander's incapacity, the army's defeat and the long list of killed and wounded; to the sailors' carelessness, the shipwreck of the vessel and the loss of the cargo; to the statesman's rapacity, the exactions of the tariff and the oppression of the people; to the judge's unfairness, the breaking down of the cause and the loss of the property. Nor has this contented us. We have gone so far, as to coin such unmeaning expressions, as fate, ill luck, chance. To fall from a cliff, 'tis a misfortune; to be drowned in a river, 'tis a misfortune; to be burnt to death in a fire, 'tis a misfortune; to be buried alive under a ruin, 'tis a misfortune. Further still, our determined incredulity is even come to this; that we have endeavoured to read our destiny in the stars, to impute our calamities to senseless creatures, rather than to the living God. Oh, blindness! Oh, stupidity! Oh, ravings of infatuated men, who, when they cannot but see their punishment, will refuse to acknowledge Him, who inflicts it upon them! *Thou hast stricken them, yet they would not believe. They have belied the Lord, and said, It is not He.*

5. Oh, Christians, let us not deceive ourselves, let us not deceive ourselves; for an error here is most serious. Nor am I now referring to the stars only, which can never be the causes, but bare signs, at the most, and fallible ones too, of effects depending on our own free will; so that Jeremiah wisely encouraged us to care nothing about them. *Be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them* (x. 2). But I am now referring to all kinds of creatures, whether endued with sense and reason, or not. Are we not perfectly aware that they are only the instruments of Divine displeasure? There can be no doubt of it, if we trust Isaiah; *The rod of Mine anger and the staff in their hand is My indignation* (x. 5). Whence, then, this mistake of ours in regarding the rod, that smites us, but not observing the hand, that holds it? Is there a common clown, who, if his enemy should strike him, with a sword, would say, "the sword has struck me;" and not rather say, "my enemy

has done it?" Is there a simple child, who, if his master should beat him, with a rod, would say, "the rod has beaten me," and not rather say, "my master has done it?" And, should a convict suffer death under the sentence of the Prince, does he attribute it to the executioner's hand, or to the Prince's sentence? Wherefore, when GOD smites us, are we so unwilling to allow, that GOD does it? *We say, it is not He.* We act like so many silly senseless dogs, who will furiously rush at the stone that wounds them,[1] and all the while care nothing for the hand, which threw it. Why is it we act thus? It is from the dislike we have to being called, on any occasion, to self-examination, to repentance, to the knowledge of ourselves: because, so long as we can trace our sufferings to any other cause, we never lay to heart the malignity of the sin, on account of which we suffer; we pay no regard to the severity of the LORD, from whose hand we suffer: and hence, by insensible degrees, we divest ourselves of that fear, natural to man, that there is a GOD in the world acquainted with all our doings, remembering all our misdeeds; that fear, I mean, which every sinner is so anxious to cast off; as it is written: *The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.* For the term we here translate GOD corresponds in the Hebrew with Elohim—a word representing GOD, as He is an observer, as He is a judge, as He is a vindicator. It is then, as if the fool had said in his heart, *There is no avenger.* Every sinner finds it a sore annoyance to him that he must believe in the existence of a GOD, not as being a provident GOD, not as being a good and merciful GOD, but as being rather a strict inquirer into men's actions. It is this, that vexes him, that galls him to the quick, and puts him—even while punishments are hanging over his head—to kick and rebel; and so, instead of ascribing them to GOD, as their prime Author, he will ascribe them to men; if he can-

[1] Whether this is a fact, in natural history, we know not; but it is curious that Tasso makes a reference to it in his Ger. Liber. Canto ix. S. 88:—

Ne di ciò ben contento al corpo morto
Smontato del destriero anco fa guerra;
Quasi mastin, che 'l sasso, onde a lui porto
Fù duro colpo, infellonito afferra.

not ascribe them to men, he will ascribe them to chance; if he cannot ascribe them to chance, he will ascribe them to the stars. In this way the poor wretch is continually flattering himself, and speaking peace to his soul, although going on in his wickedness. *Thou hast stricken them, yet they would not believe: they have belied the Lord, and said, It is not He.*

6. And yet how can we possibly have any lively belief that it is GOD, who punishes us for our sins, while we are constantly adding to those very sins, for which He punishes us so severely? We have cause to use the mournful language of S. Cyprian; "Behold, judgments from heaven are poured out upon us; and yet there is no fear of GOD. Behold, no lack of rods and scourges; and yet we have no corresponding dread and alarm at our sins." Does not every day's experience confirm this? How very few are at all made better men by the spectacle of our present sufferings? On the contrary, is it not a fact almost universal, that, during a plague, rapacity and licentiousness spread more widely; that, in a time of famine, oppression and usury; that, in a time of war, profligacy and incontinence are greatly on the increase? Thus GOD spake to His people by the mouth of Amos; *I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places, yet have ye not returned unto Me, saith the Lord; and also I have withholden the rain from you, yet ye have not returned unto Me; I have smitten you with blasting and mildew, yet have ye not returned unto Me; I have made the stink of your camps to come up into your nostrils, yet have ye not returned unto Me, saith the Lord.* Can any among you, my brethren, tell me, *when* it was, and under what circumstances, that Belshazzar gave that feast, so famous—ay, so impious and profane—that Daniel has described to us? *Belshazzar, the king, made a great feast to a thousand of his lords.* You think, perhaps, that it was on the occasion of some marriage, or of some remarkable congress of princes, or at the conclusion of a peace, or on the enlargement of his dominions? S. Jerome will, however, tell you that it was, when the king was actually hemmed in by Cyrus with a most formidable siege. He had so utterly lost his senses, that he was idling at a feast with a siege at his very gates. Then it was, that,

surrounded by his troop of concubines, the miscreant was drinking himself drunk out of the stolen vessels of the temple. Then it was that, stone-deaf to the shrieks of the many sufferers, who were tumbling head-long over the walls, he was pledging in his cups, one after another, the different gods of his fathers. *They drank wine and praised the gods of gold and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone.* What a terrific scene was the spectacle of that deluge of waters, which God poured upon the earth to cleanse it from its filthy mass of impurities! And yet, with those waters before his eyes, there was a son of Noah, who did not fear to indulge in obscene thoughts (Gen. ix. 22). What a vision of death was that deluge of fire, which God emptied upon Sodom to punish it for its excess of lasciviousness! And yet, with that fire before their eyes, there were two daughters of Lot, who did not scruple to commit incest (Gen. xix. 32). But, not to press hardly on other people's sufferings, since we have so many to deplore of our own, tell me truly, my hearers, can we trace among ourselves any decided moral reformation, as the fruit of those national corrections, in which, you know it too well, we have all participated? Alas! it rather seems that we must address God in the words of Isaiah; *Behold Thou art angry, and we have sinned* (xiv. 5, Vulg.) But how can this be? Had he said, *We have sinned, and Thou art angry,* I could have understood him; but to say, *Thou art angry, and we have sinned,* sounds like a paradox. Still, it is perfectly true. Go out into the thoroughfares, and there see, whether, after such heavy corrections, there be any decrease in shameless impositions, or in dishonest trafficking. Enter the houses, and there inquire, whether there be any decrease in quarrels among brethren, or in persecution among families. Proceed onwards into the chambers, and there observe, whether laxity in conversation, or incontinence in lawful embraces, be on the decrease. Visit the evening parties, and there consider, whether scandal in story-telling, or spitefulness in jesting, be on the decline. Pass on to the country towns, and there ascertain, whether there be less intemperance in feasting, or less unrestraint in games of pleasure. Ay, and pause awhile, even at the

Churches, and there take notice, whether the irreverent chatter and the profane glance be of more rare occurrence, than they used to be. *Behold, Thou art angry, and we have sinned!* Speak it out—there is good reason enough—*Behold, Thou art angry, and we have sinned!* And do men now really believe that it is on account of their sins that GOD has so deservedly scourged us? No, no, my brethren; it cannot be. We may say it with our lips, but we do not believe it in our hearts. And yet, let us believe it, dear brethren; let us believe it, I say; for it is but too true. Let us confess that He is to us a GOD, that He is to us a Judge, that He is stern towards us, that He is a thundering GOD; nor let it ever be said that we suffered the opportunity still to escape us, without a single thought how we might appease Him.

7. I am well aware that you may find many persons, who do lay these matters at heart. But who are they? Why, the persons, who, of all others, are the least to blame for such grievous calamities; being the most innocent, the most exemplary, the most religious. They, meanwhile, who are really to blame, never give it a serious thought. Accordingly, it turns out here, as it did in Jonah's ship: all the sailors, all the passengers—that is, all the unoffending persons—on seeing the destructive storm, recorded in the Divine Scriptures, as it suddenly gathered over their heads, were struck with terror; they set hard to work in striking sail, in baling the hold, in lightening the cargo: one was occupied in keeping order, another in giving directions, another in lending help. Some were running to the helm, some were grappling the oars, some were clinging to the shrouds; they wept, they screamed, they lamented. And all this while? Why, all this while the real culprit was composedly asleep in the sides of the tossing vessel, with no idea whatever of bestirring himself for all the whistling of the wind, roaring of the sea, bellowing of the thunder, flashes of the lightning, and cries of the mariners. But *Jonah was fast asleep* (i. 5); so fast asleep that the ship-master himself must needs go, and cry aloud to him, and shake him, and rouse him up even with terms of reproach. *So the ship-master came to him and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call upon thy*

God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not. Ah, my brethren, how often do I fear, lest a like catastrophe is about to happen among ourselves! With many bodings of evil does the heaven above threaten us. It gives signs of anger and exasperation; it looks sometimes to be on the point of sinking us to the bottom. And where, in the meantime, is the man, who at all concerns himself in pacifying it? Some such there may be; but can you distinguish them? They will be found among the innocent, who suffer for the faults of others. These are the poor creatures, who will toil, weep, fast, afflict themselves, and leave nothing undone, which can at all help to calm so alarming a tempest. As to the real culprits, those usurers, those avengers, those sensualists—Alas! instead of betraying the least anxiety, they are composedly lulling themselves to sleep on the lap of self-indulgence, even in the embraces of sin itself. Christian brethren, is there no Jonah among you lying fast asleep, who may well raise a suspicion that on his account these howling storms have sprung up, which, from time to time, look, as if they would bury us in the deep? Oh, tell me, I beseech you, if it be really so; for I would address myself to that individual, and bring him to his senses by the very same terms of reproach used by this earnest intelligent ship-master; *What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think of us, that we perish not.* Why these slumbers? Why this insensibility? Why this stupor? Fresh punishments from heaven are every moment recurring among us; and art thou sunk in sleep? Not even yet hast thou sought the Lord! Not even yet hast thou commended thyself to Him! Not even yet hast thou repented of thy sins! *Arise, arise,* my beloved sinner! *Arise,* and, once for all, shake off this lethargy of death. *Arise,* I say, and at once abandon that impure connection; because 'tis for our lewdness God sends rottenness into our bones by such fearful pestilences. *Arise,* and at once agree to those terms of reconciliation; because 'tis for our contention God lays waste our provinces by such terrible carnage. *Arise,* and at once restore those ill-gotten gains; because 'tis for our avarice God impoverishes our land with such continued sterility. Now, after so long a

time, *Arise* and *call upon thy God, if so be that God will think of us, that we perish not.* There is no likelihood of His being inclined to show the least mercy, until such time, as He beholds those, who have provoked His anger, humbling themselves in supplication before Him.

8. . . .

The Second Part.

9. Did our incredulity only entail upon us those punishments of the present life, which, at the worst, are transitory, it would not so much matter. The dreadful thing is, they entail upon us punishments in a future state. Wherefore, tell me, O Christian people, what excuse can we plead, if we bring about our own final damnation? *Declare thou*—I speak in the express terms of Isaiah—*that thou mayest be justified.* Can we, then, justify ourselves by pretending that God did not warn us, in time, of our most appalling danger? Nay: but how many seasonable expedients, so as to put us on our guard, is He continually suggesting to our minds! How many are the lessons He vouchsafes! How many the good thoughts He inspires! How many the ways, in which He awakens us to the care of our salvation! If, therefore, we have made up our minds to perish in spite of Him, who is to blame? Thus far it has been your business to sit and to listen, as hearers. Now it is my wish that you should take your places and pronounce sentence, as judges. Only first be pleased to consider well this remarkable history.

The Emperor Valens, in his exceeding ingratitude towards that God, who had raised him from exile to a throne, no sooner found himself settled thereon, than he began to persecute the Catholics and favour the Arians. He did this to such a degree, that the whole Church, as if mangled and torn by the fangs of a wolf, became reduced to a state of most inconsolable distress. Moved at length by their piteous lamentations, God incited the barbarism of the North against the Imperial power of the East; and, in order to crush this invasion, Valens was obliged to take the field with a powerful army This became known to a holy man of the name of

Isaac, a secluded hermit of the mountains; who, thereupon, under an impulse from heaven, quickly left his solitude and went down to meet the Emperor, who was now advancing with all his numerous retinue of soldiers about him. He accosted him, and said in a loud voice—"Emperor, give an order for the opening of the Catholic Churches thou hast shut up, and then thou shalt return victorious: otherwise, thou shalt be left dead!" Valens heard him; but, taking him for some crazy fool, made him no answer, and went on. Isaac, not in the least discouraged by this, set out next day to meet the Prince, as before; and again raising his voice, he repeated—"Emperor, give an order for the opening of the Catholic Churches thou hast shut up, and then thou shalt return victorious: otherwise, thou wilt be left dead!" At this reiterated menace, the wicked Valens felt troubled; he felt in a strait between conflicting opinions: for it seemed a weakness, were he to attend to such speeches, as these; whereas, on the other hand, it seemed rashness, were he utterly to disdain them. Decided at last by reasons of state-policy, he determined to call a council on a matter of this importance; but his principal advisers, being Arians, had no difficulty in persuading him to chastise the hermit, rather than listen to him, should he once more appear to confront him. And Lo, on the third day comes Isaac, more resolute than ever. Pushing through the ranks of the soldiers on their march, he advances, seizes the reins of the Emperor's horse, and having brought him to a stand—"O Emperor!" he exclaims, "I am returned to tell thee that thou must open the Churches of the Catholics, which thou hast shut up; and then thou shalt return victorious: otherwise, thou wilt be left dead!"[1] . . Who would believe it? Not even upon this third denunciation would the obstinate Valens relent. So far from it, he ordered that Isaac should immediately be

[1] The translator omits the account of the miracle, said to have been wrought at this crisis for the deliverance of Isaac, and by which his life was saved. In the hands of Segneri, this heightens the oratorical effect of the story; which is, however, sufficiently instructive and impressive without it. It is worthy of notice, that while Sozomen and Socrates make mention of this miracle in their Ecclesiastical histories, the judicious Fleury passes it by in silence. (B. xvii. s. 37.)

committed, as a prisoner, to the charge of the two senators, Saturninus and Victor; by them to be kept in custody, until the return of the Emperor, when he would be punished, as he deserved. "What!" replied Isaac, using the words, which holy Micaiah on a like occasion addressed to wicked Ahab, "Thou return to punish me! Ride on then, and, if thou returnest at all, know that GOD hath not spoken by my mouth. Thou wilt offer thine enemies battle: unable to resist their onset, thou wilt retreat, thou wilt fly; and at last falling into their hands, in a flame thou little thinkest of, thou wilt be burnt to death!" All, that Isaac predicted, came to pass. The Emperor marched on, he fought, he was soon defeated: he fled with his entire army routed and dispersed. In order to conceal himself from the pursuers close at his heels, he crept into a miserable thatched hovel: thither they traced him, instantly set the straw on fire, and burnt the Emperor alive. In consequence of this fatal result, Isaac was released from his chains with all honour and distinction; and these two senators made him a present of two monasteries, contending with each other, who should be the first to build one for him.

Now, since you have heard the termination of this history, please, my brethren, to pronounce your sentence. At the last Day of universal Judgment, should the Emperor Valens take it upon himself to dispute the matter with GOD, and to maintain that he died in those flames, not from any fault of his own, but that GOD was to blame for it, how does it strike you? Don't you think that one single Isaac would be enough to render him speechless? "Be silent," Isaac would say, "be silent, presumptuous man! Did I not go to thee three successive times, and offer thee the means, and very ample means they were, of saving both thy body and thy soul? And, if thou didst madly kick against GOD, and lash out in a rage against me, how darest thou, vile wretch, now complain?" Candidly tell me, my brethren, how does it strike you? Who would be in the right—Isaac, or Valens? Would not GOD's cause be abundantly vindicated by such a defence? But if it would, where then, alas! alas! where then are you, ye sinners? Against you also this sentence is

pronounced. You take upon you, perhaps, to charge God with that condemnation, which you are directly bringing upon yourselves by your present evil courses; and don't you perceive how many Isaacs you will have, without the least ceremony, to stop your mouths, and to put you to shame? Were there none, but we preachers only, should not we be quite enough to render you speechless? Pardon me, if even I—such a poor, vile, creeping worm as I—should be obliged to take up arms against you in defence of the cause of God; deposing and attesting that I ascended your pulpit, like another Isaac; that I threatened, over and over again, in the Name of God, that, unless you wished to fall into the everlasting flame, you, ye libertines, must renounce those impure practices; you, ye young men, must avoid those evil communications; you, ye traffickers, must cease from those unjust profits; you, ye slanderers, must restore that injured reputation; you, ye avengers, must agree to those terms of peace so much desired. But, if you were unwilling to accept such good counsels, how can you ever complain of God? How can you justify yourselves? How can you utter a single word in your defence? Has not God fully performed His part by simply repeating His warnings, which this very day I again sound in your ears, saying what I said at first—*He will miserably destroy those wicked men?* He will *destroy* them in this present life; and, what is infinitely worse, He will *destroy* them in the life to come. And don't tell me, that you would at once follow my advice, could you feel only quite certain that ruin would be the sure consequence of your not following it; but that you have no faith in me. For even Valens, could he have felt quite certain that he would die in the flames for not restoring the Churches, would, in that case, have restored them; and nothing prevented his doing so, but a notion that it would be something derogatory to his character to credit the word of a poor, bare-footed vagrant, an entire stranger, one, of whom he absolutely knew nothing. Such a plea, however, will not avail him; because, when advice is according to the laws of God, the Sacred Scriptures, and the doctrines of the Gospel, this is quite enough. It matters little, as to the person who

gives it, whether he be learned or ignorant, Saint or sinner. I am a sinner, my brethren, and I am ignorant besides; yea, I am the least of all the preachers who address you so eloquently from these pulpits. But the Gospel assures me of this—If you will amend your wicked lives, you will escape hell; otherwise, you will not.—Do you understand me?—Otherwise, you will not! What would you have me say more? You must now instantly set to work; for, to some among you this may prove the final warning—the trumpet's last sound; yes, the trumpet's very last sound! Already have your preachers, your Isaacs, not for the third, nor for the fourth time, but far more repeatedly, been returning to you; so that the flame may be drawing nearer and nearer to your tenements of straw. Quick! then, quick! I say, because, after this, there may come no further denunciation. And, since the ALMIGHTY has so many times, often and often, thundered, should He now proceed to cast forth His lightning, we must be the sufferers.[1]

[1] This Sermon, in consequence of its historical character, and as dwelling so much on those convulsions in the natural and political world, which marked the middle of the seventeenth century, was at first regarded by the translator, as unfit for reproduction at the present time. But the remembrance of the various inflictions and judgments of heaven—whether by war, pestilence, or famine—with which our own beloved country has been visited from the commencement of this century, and especially in more recent times, has led him to a different opinion. He ventures, then, to hope that this Sermon may deepen our convictions of the great truth, that "Sin is a reproach to any people;" and put us upon more seriously asking ourselves, whether the Divine chastisements have wrought in us, as a nation, their intended merciful effects. The translator has not thought fit to correct the popular mistake in Segneri's time, namely, that lightning succeeds thunder, and is the effect of it; the reverse of this being the fact. The expression at Micah vi. 9, is very remarkable, as briefly comprehending the solemn lesson taught in this Sermon—"*Hear* ye *the rod;*" the *Voice* of GOD speaking before the *blow.*

SERMON XVI.

ON AVOIDING THE OCCASIONS OF SIN.

S. Luke xi. 21.

"When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace."

1. I have always admired the exquisite sagacity, shown on a certain occasion by Trochilus a favourite disciple of Plato. By almost a miracle he had escaped from a desperate storm at sea, in which the ship was dashed to pieces, and he himself all but drowned. Reaching his home in a miserable plight, what, think you, was the first thing he did? He immediately ordered that two windows in a saloon charmingly situated, so as to front the sea, should be walled up; for fear, he said, lest, some fine day, looking on the sea, when calm and tranquil, he should be again tempted to venture on its waters.

Now, at this most Holy season of Lent, it will not be at all surprising to find numbers among you, who, under a powerful impression of the stirring appeals they have heard or the encouraging examples they have witnessed, are making good their escape, hand in hand together, from the deadly shipwreck of sin. But do you therefore believe, that for this mere reason I could depend—entirely depend—on you? Certainly not. I should rather fear, lest, coming to look at your sin under an altered aspect, you should be incautiously led to behave like those persons, who, though just saved from the ravenous deep, are seen engaged on the shore in collecting

the scattered fragments of the vessel, with the design, after repairing them, of once more venturing their lives on the very element, whose treachery they had only just now experienced. I come, therefore, to exhort you to wall up all your windows, that front the sea. Without a metaphor, I come to exhort you to keep aloof from all those occasions, which may easily entice you back to your former sins; because, so long as one such occasion only be left, it is enough to make you miscarry, to betray you into fresh offences and danger.

I am aware that this may appear to some a very rigorous demand, a requiring of you too much; that you must henceforth make up your minds to deny yourselves a single look. But the Gospel affirms quite the contrary, if we will only believe it. It teaches us that there is no other method to live in peace and safety, than by keeping those avenues blocked up and approaches guarded, by which external objects may approach to tempt us. *When a strong man armed keepeth his outer court his goods are in peace.* (Vulg.)[1] Have you noticed the expression? He does not say, the inner apartment, the centre of the house; he says, the *court, his outer court:* for, let but temptation effect the smallest entrance, and who can then resist it? Do you then desire, at this season of Lent, to be truly, permanently, and savingly converted to GOD? There is no other way before you. You must not only renounce sin, but every thing, that tends to solicit you to it. Unless this be done, your conversion, instead of its being genuine, will be found a counterfeit. And why? Because serious attention to the proofs, which I shall adduce, will most clearly convince you, that there is no greater folly nor presumption in the world, than for you to expect to preserve your innocency, while you are laying yourselves open to the occasions of sin.

2. All pleasurable objects have this peculiarity about them. While they are immediately in sight, we find it very

[1] *His outer court*, or court-yard, and not *his palace* is unquestionably the correct rendering of the original. Canon Wordsworth, referring to the text, reminds us in his excellent edition of the Greek Testament, that the term is "used eight times in the history of the Crucifixion, when our LORD encountered Satan in the *court-yard* of the High Priest."

hard to judge aright, whether we ought to choose, or to reject them: for their presence, as with some magical charm, captivates our senses, bewitches our understandings, and enslaves our affections. Aristotle in his famous Ethics expressly states this. He instances it in the conduct of the Trojan senators, who when they consulted about Helen, wisely decided, during her absence, that she ought to be banished from the city, thereby to save themselves from the wrath of the gods and of men; but, when they beheld her near, in the midst of them, dazzling their eyes with the loveliness of her person and the charming elegance of her manners, they changed their opinion and resolved to retain her still within the walls, in spite of confederate Greece and all its fury. And who among us does not find this to be continually verified in his own experience? How far more difficult it is for a hungry man to abstain from eating, when there is before him a plentiful board; or, a feverish man to deny himself drink, when he sees the full cup at his side? Let the gaming table be removed out of the gambler's sight, and he can easily resolve to have nothing more to do with the dice, which have done him such cruel mischief: he hates them, he abhors them, he execrates them; but, let him only chance to see them in the hands of his boon companion, and what can prevent his immediately resuming those bad habits, he only a moment ago condemned? In the same way, in the presence of an enemy, it is found a more difficult thing to repress anger; in the presence of money, to decline a fraud; in the presence of a flatterer, to mortify pride; in the presence of a fair tempter, to restrain lust. And, to be quite convinced of this, don't you remember what the last resource of the devil was, when he assaulted our LORD in the desert? He offered to make Him the Ruler of the universe, would He only consent to be the worshipper of hell. But what did the evil one do first? He first conducted CHRIST to the summit of an *exceeding high mountain*, and from thence he minutely pointed out to Him every country and every kingdom of the earth. This being done, he proceeded to his insolent proposal. Now why all this ado? Could he not have negociated the same treaty with CHRIST under the tangled

horrors of a forest, or 'mid the obscure depths of a cavern? Even in these places, expert, as he was, in geography, he could, without calling in the help of a map, have easily said, "The world is now divided into three parts, called Europe, Africa, and Asia. Asia, which is the largest, contains such and such provinces: such and such provinces belong to Africa, which is the most wonderful: such and such belong to Europe, which is the most beautiful. In these provinces there are such and such magnificent cities; and these charming districts, these well-stocked rivers, these noble seas severally belong to each: and, beyond them, there lies another world, almost as big as this; in which are to be found gold mines inexhaustible, a population beyond number, and productions of nature the most extraordinary. It is true, that this additional world is yet but imperfectly discovered: but I am willing to throw it you, *extra*, into the bargain, provided only that you now bend your knees and do me homage; *All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me.* (S. Matt. iv. 9). Now, why was not the devil satisfied with only uttering words to this effect? Why must he needs have all, that he had promised, actually paraded before CHRIST, that He might see it? *He showed Him all the kingdoms of the world.* And, in order to this, why was he at the pains of conveying Him through the air to the summit of a mountain, which was so inaccessible, that, if we are to believe S. Chrysostom, it soared far above all the loftiest eminences in the world? Why? but because this subtle fiend perfectly well knew the power, which an object present to the eye exercises over our minds, and that, when the senses are thus captured first, the will is soon brought to surrender.

But this, my brethren, is the very state you are in, so long as you are living with the occasions of sin close about you. The fascinating object is ever in your sight, and, so to speak, within your grasp. You hear its invitations, you gaze on its charms, you feel its flatteries. Under such circumstances, I ask, can you find it an easy matter to resist, to hate, to reject it? "This," exclaims S. Jerome, moved with righteous indignation against you, "this is presumption. For the senses

fix upon that, which they see, hear, smell, taste, handle; and what holds out to them the prospect of gratification, that they pursue." Such being the fact, who will be surety for it, that you may gaze at the theatre on those profane exhibitions, so full of pleasure, and yet not be pleased with them? that you may read in romances those amorous tales, so full of delight, and yet not be delighted with them? that you may sit listening at a concert to those charming warblers, and yet not be charmed with them? Pray, have the kindness to tell me, who is your guarantee for this? Because on this the solution of our question must depend; whether your's be a reasonable hope, or rather a rash presumption.

3. Now, since this principle is one of universal application, you must assert a claim to some special prerogative, on which to ground your hopes, as ever you would exempt them from the charge of presumption. Tell me therefore, upon what is your reliance placed, when you so coolly thrust yourself into the high-road of temptation? I think I know it, without your telling me. Unless I mistake, you are relying either upon your own virtue, or upon the grace of God. The first makes you feel strong; the last gives you a feeling of security. Perhaps your idea is, that you have so completely brought your lower appetites under restraint, that they will not rebel against you: it is this, that makes you feel strong. Or, you suppose yourself to be so singularly protected by God, that He will never forsake you: and it is this, that gives you a feeling of security. Is it so? I confess myself unable to discover any other more probable reasons for the confidence you express in this matter. Let us then inquire, whether either of the two be so well-grounded, as to justify the sanguine opinion you now entertain of your state, and so to release you from all necessity of *keeping* your *outer court*.

First, as to the restraint, under which you have brought your lower appetites, just inform me; to what extent have you succeeded in this? Have you eclipsed those holy men, who passed nearly their whole lives in prayers, in tears, in mortification, in self-denial? I, for one, refuse to give you credit for this. However, suppose we grant it you; yet I observe, in the case of these holy men, that they trembled at

the approach of any sinful temptation, and frankly confessed that they could only promise themselves victory by fighting, like so many Parthians; that is, not so much by facing the enemy, as by retreating before him. What S. Jerome avowed in his reply to Vigilantius may well speak for them all. When asked, what made him so timid, and why, having it in his power to live, like a civilized being, in the city, he preferred deserting his home, and, like a wild beast, settling himself down in the wilderness, the Saint answered, "Knowest thou what causes me fear? I fear to see thee. I fear to hear thee. I fear, lest I should be not able to resist thy importunity. If this should seem to thee only a trifling excuse, why then, I fear the various occasions of sinning, in the midst of which thy life is spent. I fear the angry collisions. I fear the idle gossip. I fear the grasping avarice. I fear the swelling pride. I fear the lascivious glances." Then under the idea of his not having yet sufficiently explained himself, he felt no shame in using these very expressions, which, had he not really used them, I would never mention—"I fear to meet the fair courtezans, and lest their deluding charms and voluptuous eyes should entice me to deeds of wickedness." Hereupon Vigilantius insisted, that to act in this way was not so much a glorious victory, as a cowardly flight, and a base desertion. "Have patience with me," Jerome rejoined; "I must acknowledge how weak I am; I cannot sum up courage to venture in thy company against such powerful adversaries; for, although I might possibly come off victorious, yet my fears would rather lead me to anticipate a defeat. And therefore I confess my weakness. I refuse to fight in the hope of conquering, lest I should be conquered myself"—it being a wiser course in our spiritual conflicts to flee, so as to prevent a discomfiture, than, for not having fled, to be routed and overcome. S. Jerome, you see, could place but little trust in himself on these occasions; and, after all, they threatened him with no immediate, but only with a remote danger; as, for instance, his chancing to come in the way of some light woman. How then can you ever promise yourself such entire security, when the danger besetting you is not a remote one, but nigh at hand; as, for instance (not

to drop our former illustration), your gazing on the countenance of some fair one, your addressing her, your listening to her, and your allowing yourself freely and familiarly to converse with her? What! Do you not fear her smiles, when S. Jerome feared only her look? Can you venture to pay a visit, when he could not trust himself to a chance meeting? Does your bosom then bear more livid traces of the marks of the stone's repeated blow, than were ever stamped on S. Jerome's? By your leave, just let me see. Where are the cheeks, more wrinkled through fasting? Where are the knees, more hardened through praying? Where are the arms, more wearied with scourging? Where are the eyes, more swollen with floods of tears? Do the midnight vigils, which you have regularly observed, either in meditating upon the Scriptures or in writing comments upon them, surpass the vigils kept by S. Jerome? At what distance have you left him behind you in the frequency and rigour of your various acts of penance and self-discipline? And, would you now make me believe that your flesh is more subdued to the Spirit, than was the case with so great a Saint, as he was? I don't believe you: excuse me, but I don't believe you, try hard, as you can, to convince me. And therefore you too must be content, however strong you feel, to betake yourself with S. Jerome to a speedy flight from the occasions of sin.

Ezekiel declares, *Such of them as shall flee shall escape, and they shall be on the mountains, like doves in the valleys, all of them trembling* (vii. 16, Vulg.). Doves, when they have reached on the wing some mountain top, are less timid, than when they walked in the valleys below; but with godly persons, it is not so. They have as much reason to fear, when they are, so to say, on the top of perfection, as they had, when they were on the lower ground beneath. *They shall be on the mountains, like doves in the valleys, all of them trembling.* For, when we affirm that *perfect love casteth out fear,* we do not mean that it casts out the fear of the fault of sin, but the fear of the punishment of sin, which no longer causes uneasiness—"fear of the punishment, not fear of the fault" (T. Aquinas). So far is love from casting out the fear of the fault, that it rather increases it. The more a man loves God,

the greater care and pains he will take not to lose Him. Be this, however, as it may; that you may not regard the above fears, as the needless qualms of an over-righteous Jerome, let me tell you that I could produce a long list of men quite blameless in their general lives, who, when exposed to similar temptations, not only modestly and frankly confessed their weakness, but by their shameful relapses into sin actually attested it . . . . We learn from their sad examples that the fears S. Jerome had of himself were no foolish scruples, but well founded in truth. And therefore how can you pretend to be the only persons free from such fears—*you* too, men clothed in fine linen; *you*, scented with perfumes; *you*, nursed on the lap of ease; *you*, pampered with dainties—how can you promise yourselves, in the midst of a world of temptation, such a strength, as men, who wore out their lives for CHRIST's sake in the caves of the earth, never once presumed to arrogate to themselves? Oh, what silly boasting! Oh, what presumption is this! I answer you with the proverb of the wise man; *He that trusteth in his riches shall fall* (xi. 28.)

4. Now, if these men, with all those attainments in holiness, which had made them really strong, had not the smallest expectation of receiving that superabundant grace from GOD, which would render them secure, what shall we say of you, (to come to the second ground of your confidence), who are still fondly expecting it? Never does GOD refuse to any man a sufficient protection. Still, you must remember that, an end being attainable by a more ordinary means, He is not wont to employ one, that is extraordinary. This is held to be a general rule, not less applying to the dispensations of Grace, than to those of nature. And you will find that the ALMIGHTY for this reason never performs a miracle, when the object, for which you would fain see one, can be effected without. "At the point, where human weakness fails, Divine power meets us with help:" 'tis thus the great Commentator Tostatus thus wisely states the doctrine: "and therefore miracles are only performed, when human resources are proved to be inadequate." Would you have an example of this, out of the vast numbers one might adduce from Holy Scripture, consider the case of the Magi. When they had to

set out on their journey to CHRIST, they had a star for their guide; when they had to return to their own homes, they had none. The fact is admitted. And yet, as on their return home they had to strike out a new road, one perhaps more fatiguing, more intricate, and more unknown, it would seem they needed some such guidance. How then was it? Why, in their journey to CHRIST, they must reach a spot, which it was quite out of the power of any human being to indicate to them; it being the most Holy grotto of Bethlehem, a place at that time as unknown in the world, as it was renowned in Heaven: and therefore they were supplied with that celestial luminary to conduct them thither. But the case was different on their return to their own country: for then, as they were perfectly well acquainted with their destination, if ignorant of the way, they could easily have discovered it by employing guides, or asking men on the road, or sending people on to explore. On the same principle, the Angel struck off in the prison the chains of Peter and his fetters: but he did not help him to put on his clothes; because Peter could very well do this for himself. On the same principle, the Angel saved in the storm the ship of Paul and his fellow-passengers: but he did not help him to land; because Paul could very well do this for himself. And, just as CHRIST was able to raise Lazarus alive from his grave, though his body lay in a state of putrefaction, so unquestionably He could with the greatest ease have made the sepulchral stone leap up into the air: but, notwithstanding this, He would have this stone removed by the standers-by—*Take ye away the stone* (S. John xi. 39) —because a task, such as this, by no means exceeded their strength. From all these interesting cases you may infer, that we ought never to expect any extraordinary assistance from GOD, when an ordinary one would be sufficient for the end we have in view.

To return then to our main point, it must be perfectly clear that by avoiding that occasion of sin, into which with open eyes you thrust yourself, you might easily preserve your innocence by means of the ordinary assistance alone, which GOD's providence affords you. *He who takes heed of a snare shall be safe.* (Prov. xi. 15, Vulg.) So far you have the pro-

mise of God's support; nor can it fail you. *The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.* Beyond this, how can you dare promise yourself some special protection, and then in this confidence go, and mix in scenes of temptation and danger, as if you would constrain Him to work a miracle in your defence? If this be not presumption, pray, what is? Does a comedy excite in you impure thoughts, and do you still allow yourself to listen to it? Does a game of chance provoke your angry feelings, and do you still sit to play it out? Does a conversation kindle your libidinous flames, and do you consent to renew it? And do you expect that God will preserve you unharmed in the midst of the fire, when it was far more easy for you never to have approached it, and so never to have experienced its heat? Never, never will He thus preserve you. I am quite aware that He once preserved from harm the three young men in the Babylonian furnace, so that *the fire had no power upon their bodies, neither was an hair of their heads singed* (Dan. iii. 27); that He preserved the infant Moses from being drowned in the waters of the Nile; that He preserved Daniel from being devoured by the hungry lions; and, which was a still greater deliverance, that He preserved the whole family of Noah, confined within a seraglio of bears, wolves, panthers, wild boars, tigers, and leopards, without its sustaining the least injury. But none of these persons, you will please to observe, had cast themselves, of their own caprice, into the teeth of such dangers. And therefore gather from all such examples this weighty lesson—He, who exposes himself wilfully in the path of temptation, must never presume on his receiving any special assistance from God. Who then, you ask, may? why, he who exposes himself on the demand of duty, in the path of obedience, on the call of charity. *He hath given His Angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways* (Ps. xci. 2). Have you rightly understood this text? In what places wilt thou be protected? In what places wilt thou be kept from falling? When thou art dashing over precipices? By no means: in the *ways;* yea, in those ways only, into which thy duty has conducted thee—in *thy* ways. The man, who needlessly risks his life among the clefted rocks and the deep yawning chasms, Oh, how soon

must he perish! God Himself, speaking to Job, tells us as much, *Behold his hope shall fail him, and in the sight of all he shall be cast down.* (Job xl. 28, Vulg.)

A most remarkable difference, which I have had occasion to notice, between Judith, the glory of the renowned Bethulia, and Dinah, the daughter of the patriarch Jacob, seems here to come in aid of my argument. I need not tell you how Judith, when designing the overthrow of the proud Holofernes, boldly penetrated into the camp of the Assyrians, and tarried many days there in the midst of a crowded throng of rude lawless men. She was observed now speaking to the spies, now arguing with the sentinels, now making overtures to the courtiers, now talking to the Commander himself. And, all this time, she was decked out with every advantage and attraction of dress, every gay and sparkling ornament, diffusing fragrance wherever she went, in all the fascination of her beauty. How vastly inferior to her, in these respects, was Dinah! In the company of her pilgrim brethren she had reached a certain town, called Shalem, nigh unto which they halted and pitched their tents on a piece of ground they had purchased for that purpose. The poor damsel, quite at a loss how to beguile the live-long day, pent up as she was within her tent, had the curiosity to venture a little out of bounds, just *to see the daughters of the land* (Gen. xxxiv. 1); perhaps to observe—a thing quite natural—how they dressed, what finery they wore. But what followed? Scarcely had this innocent dove quitted its nest, than it fell into the claws of a voracious bird of prey; for such the prince of that country proved himself to be: and so it came to pass, that, whereas Judith with her chastity unblemished returned to her home, Dinah went back to her tent with the loss of her virgin honour. How was it possible now for one of these women, being so far less exposed, to incur such an irreparable disgrace; while the other, who was so much more exposed, enjoyed such a perfect security? Judith penetrated into the very camp of the soldiers; Dinah scarce got beyond the limits of her tent. Judith went to hold a conference with men; Dinah went *to see the daughters of the land.* Judith studied to be admired; Dinah scarcely expected to be seen.

Judith decked herself out with idolatrous finery; Dinah did not even change her ordinary dress. Judith prolonged her visit; Dinah merely indulged in a passing trip. And yet, notwithstanding all this, Dinah lamentably fell, while Judith stood triumphantly firm. And what caused all this difference? Simply because the latter faced so great a danger on a Divine impulse, as we are expressly informed—"not from impure lust, but from virtue" (Judith x. 4, Vulg.); whereas the other exposed herself by an act of her own will, and from a feminine curiosity, that she might *see the daughters of the land*. Produce me, if you can, any sounder reason for the difference of the results in the two cases. This, beyond all doubt, is GOD's way of dealing with us, to vouchsafe a far more abundant measure of His protection to a person, who finds himself involved in such dangers from necessity, than to another, who has challenged them out of his own caprice. Did He not preserve Sarah untouched, when in the power of Pharaoh, who had carried her off (Gen. xii.)? Did He not preserve Rebekah safe, when in the house of Abimelech, who had fallen in love with her (xxvi.)? Did He not preserve Joseph unmoved amid the charms of his mistress, who enticed him (xxxix.)? Did He not preserve Susannah undefiled amid the assaults of the elders, who ensnared her? He certainly did: He thus preserved them all. But then they all ran these risks in obedience to a Divine command, as was the case with Sarah and Rebekah; or, at least, they did not voluntarily incur them, as was the case with Joseph and Susannah. On the other hand, David, by no means a less holy person, than any of these, because he once ventured for his own gratification to gaze from his window on the beauty of Bathsheba, was immediately abandoned by GOD, and left, not so much to fall, as to plunge headlong, into the abyss, first of flagrant adultery, and then of infamous homicide. On the strength of these examples you may conclude, should it ever be your lot to find yourselves, either from necessity or against your own will, exposed to any like danger of sinning, that GOD, in answer to your supplications, will not refuse so to protect you, that the deadly poison may do you no mischief: whereas, if you put yourselves forward to sport on the

brink of temptation, you have sad cause to fear and tremble for the consequences; because to expect from GOD, under such circumstances, any special protection to save you from the fatal infection, would amount to sheer presumption.

"Who will have pity on a charmer, that is bitten by a serpent" (Ecclus. xii. 13)? What did the preacher intend by asking this question? I will tell you. Should some poor gardener, shepherd, or wayfaring man chance to be bitten by a serpent, lurking insidiously under the green herb, every one pities him; all are quickly on the move to do something to relieve him: but, should the person bitten be some charmer who, down yonder in the public streets, takes the serpent into his hand, fondles it, puts it into his mouth, licks and kisses it, why, then, every stander-by will rather say, "Ah, it served him quite right!" The serpent here represents the occasion: don't, however, expect to receive the same amount of pity, whether it be the serpent, who first attacks you, or whether you are the first to provoke the serpent. And yet, after all I can urge, still you refuse to believe it. For, only let the Priest positively refuse to pronounce the Absolution of your sins, unless you first make a resolution to avoid the next occasion of repeating those sins—you will instantly accuse him of being over strict, unfeeling, unreasonable; so strong is the impression you have on your mind, that he ought to trust you. But how can he possibly trust you, convinced, as he is, that, while you are in this state of mind, GOD will by no means protect you? Pray attend to this latter point; for it much deserves your consideration.

5. We know, that, when the Almighty prohibited any action among His people, He, at the same time, generally prohibited whatever could furnish even the remotest occasion to that action. Thus, at the beginning, in the earthly Paradise, when He forbade our first parents' eating of the tree of knowledge, He forbade them to "touch it" (Gen. iii. 3). Nor did He proceed otherwise with the Israelites: for if He forbade their worshipping any kind of image, He also forbade their having an image in their possession. And, if He forbade their using leavened bread at the Passover, He forbade likewise their keeping any (Ex. xii. 19): and, if

He forbade their ascending the sides of Mount Sinai, He forbade them to approach its borders (xix.): and, if He forbade their dressing food on the Sabbath-day, He forbade them equally to kindle a fire: and, just in the same way, if He forbade the Nazarites drinking wine, He forbade them alike even to taste the grape, whether fresh or dried (Numb. vi.); lest, their senses being taken with the sweetness of the fruit, they should long for the luscious liquor. In the New Testament, He has been at still greater pains to enforce the same rule. Inquire, concerning this, of S. John Chrysostom; and he will tell you, that CHRIST in His Evangelical Law has scarcely done any thing else, than provide for the cutting off all those occasions, whereby men come so easily to transgress the injunctions of the old Commandments. Let us instance some remarkable proofs of this. Under the old Law, murder was prohibited; *Thou shalt do no murder* (Ex. xx.): but to what use? This law was little observed; because people, being in the habit of provoking their neighbours by irritating language, could then hardly restrain themselves from proceeding from words to blows, and from blows to bloodshed. What then did CHRIST do? He made a hedge around this Commandment, and He spake thus—*Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; but I say unto you that whosoever shall say to his brother Raca shall be in danger of the council* (S. Matt. v. 21, 22). See, how, to prevent bloodshed, He cut off the occasion, furnished by irritating language. Again, under the old Law, perjury was prohibited; *Ye shall not swear by My Name falsely* (Lev. xix. 2). But to what use? This also was easily disobeyed; because people, commonly expressing themselves in exaggerated language, easily passed on then from exaggerations to oaths, and from oaths to perjury. What then did CHRIST do? He made another hedge around this other Commandment, and He spake thus—*Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself; but I say unto you, Swear not at all; but let your communication be yea yea, nay nay.* See, how, to prevent perjury, He cuts off the occasion, furnished by needless exaggerations. Once more. Under the old Law, adultery was forbidden; *Thou shalt not commit adultery:* but to what use? Neither was this faithfully observed; because

people, allowing themselves the liberty to feast their eyes on female beauty, found it difficult then to restrain themselves, so as not to advance from looks to desires, and from desires to their consequences. What then did CHRIST do? For this Commandment also He provided another hedge to secure it, and He spake thus—*Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery; but I say unto you, that whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her hath already committed adultery with her in his heart.* See, how to prevent adultery, He cuts off the occasion, furnished by unrestrained looks. Hence, from these and other like regulations it would appear, that CHRIST came among us almost with no other design, than to defend us from every thing tending to expose us to any imminent danger of overstepping and breaking the Law; the very design, which the great prophet Isaiah seems to have contemplated, when he shrewdly foretold, that CHRIST, to His special honour, would be called *The Builder up of the hedges.* (lviii. 12, Vulg.) What are we now to infer from all this? Precisely what I ventured to assert; namely, that, on occasions like these, GOD will decline granting us any extraordinary protection. For, tell me, why should He so expressly and so anxiously bid us keep aloof, to the utmost of our power, from all such occasions, had He minded to protect us under them with that extraordinary, that special, that superabundant help, upon which you are reckoning? On this supposition, it was quite superfluous in Him to keep us so far off from the precipice; since He might have allowed us to approach its very edge, and then have suddenly stept forward to prevent our falling over. He might have left us at full liberty to feast our eyes, as we liked; to exaggerate without any bridle on our tongues, and to call people names to our heart's content; and then have interposed, so as to prevent our committing adultery, perjury, and murder. But, since He has ordered the matter quite otherwise, tell me, Christians, what, does this prove? Does it not unquestionably prove, that we ought never on any expectation of His grace to run the risk of doing what is wrong?[1] This inference surely is plain,

[1] "Put not thy soul in Satan's hands, in hope to have it home again by CHRIST. *Maledictus*, saith S. Augustine, *qui peccat in spe.*" Dr. Richard Clerke (Serm. S. Luke xxii. 46).

obvious, incontrovertible. And, since it is so, how are you acting? Upon what are you relying? When will you be convinced, that, unless you are careful to *keep the outer court*, you must certainly perish? What further would you have, in proof of this?

You cannot now but see how utterly impossible it is for you to build your hopes, with any degree of satisfaction, either on your own virtue, as rendering you strong, or, on the Divine grace and protection, as rendering you secure. The fears, which others have expressed in this matter, should make you tremble, and their miscarriages should put you on your guard. Over-rash is the traveller, who must needs go and wade through a swollen wintry stream, after he has seen others before him carried down by its torrent. Over-rash is the way-faring man, who persists in spending the night in a dark lonely forest, after he has heard of others before him, falling there into the hands of assassins. Now therefore shut up those bad books, that afford you so much entertainment, those unprincipled and dangerous publications. Renounce that irreligious society. Abstain for the future from those pernicious games of chance. Curb your strong liking to the many sallies of gallantry, which are carried on, even in our public streets: and, if you at all value your souls, break off resolutely for the future every abandoned and disreputable connection. What use can there be in your saying, "In my case there is now no cause whatever for fear. I am not the man I was. I will be on my guard. I will be true to my principles. Certainly, I shall keep company with the person you allude to; but no harm will come of it." And I say unto you in reply, No: away with her; away with her! GOD requires of you no less a sacrifice; because whoever renounces idolatry—there is no help for him—he must put away the idol as well. Unhappy Solomon! some have despaired of his salvation, since he failed in this duty. What your particular idol is, can be no secret. When you pay your adoration to that fair female countenance, lauded by you to the very skies, as being so angelic and even Divine, you have revolted from CHRIST; you have virtually committed idolatry. What then has your idol to do any longer in your dwelling? Send her

away; send her away! Get rid of the occasions of sin: yea, part with every thing about you, which may serve to remind you of her—every wicked memento. Only look at these indecent pictures, hung about your room, as if to shame the more serious and Sacred subjects, excluded by them. Those emblems of voluptuousness, those immodest sculptured figures, —what is it they represent? So many idolatries! And is it a pleasing reflection to your mind, that, when CHRIST at your dying hour shall come to summon you, He will find such objects, as these in your room, close to your sick bed? Oh, what a wretched, Oh, what a desperate extremity for you to be in! Far be it from me to wish you any such misery: for your eternal salvation would indeed be questionable, were you like Solomon, thus to die, with your idols about you. Do then, as I say; do rather, as GOD Himself says: for His express Commandment is, *Hew down the graven images; destroy the names of them out of that place* (Deut. xii. 3). Cast from your dwellings those representations, which can only forbode death and produce nothing but damnation: scatter them far and wide; or, better still, commit them to the flames; and, as the famous philosopher Crates exclaimed at every handful of his money, while he was casting it into the sea, "I drown you, that you may not drown me! I drown you, that you may not drown me!" Just so, as you cast those treasures of iniquity into the fire, say in a like heroic spirit; "Away, ye vile traitors. I burn you, that ye burn not me! I burn you, that ye burn not me!" This will demonstrate the truth of what you say. Otherwise—let there be no mistake between us—your conversion is counterfeit. And why? Because that man is convicted of having never honestly purposed to *keep* sin far off from his soul, who can yet open *his outer court* to its admission.

THE SECOND PART.

6. And have I then been labouring all this time to prove how extremely difficult every person must find it to preserve his innocence in the immediate presence of temptation? Ah,

what folly in me! I seem to have wasted the whole morning. Why, this perhaps is the most obvious truth, that we commonly hear from the pulpit. Everybody knows it: everybody has some experience of it. But, if so, why does not everybody, at the same time, avoid the occasions of temptation? The reason is; people love to sin. They are, far too many of them, inwardly inflamed with their inordinate lusts. And what is the consequence? They are continually in pursuit of those amusements, which in a manner feed this flame, though it be in secret. Away they go to balls, to evening parties, to visits, to feasts: and, since they cannot gratify their love of pleasure in the grosser form elsewhere, they go, where entertainments are carried on under the disguise of recreation. Whenever therefore, my hearers, you see people congregated together for amusement's sake in such places, be they who they may, set them down, without any risk of pronouncing a rash judgment, as sinning.[1] If they do not openly commit sin—which would be saying too much—they sin, at any rate, in their thoughts; they sin in their looks; they sin in their laughter; they sin in the lusts, which they privily cherish in their hearts. *They are all adulterers, as an oven heated by the baker.* (Hosea vii. 4.) Yes, declares Hosea, they are like *an oven,* the heat of which does not escape, because it cannot: it is confined; it is imprisoned: but Oh, were the obstruction once removed! You would behold the heat flame upwards, rising as many cubits high, as that furnace in Babylon, which burst forth with such destructive rage; *It burnt such, as it found near.* (Dan. iii. 22, Vulg.) Is any one taken by surprise at hearing me use this unusual language? Ah, my Pisa, such language is now-a-days become too necessary. Is it possible for thee to reflect upon the way, in which, by slow and almost imperceptible degrees,

[1] Here, as in other like passages, due allowance must be made for the highly immoral state of Italy in the 17th century, when it would appear, people could scarcely associate together for innocent recreation without abusing the occasion to the purposes of sin. It may also be remembered how naturally the strict regular Jesuit Priest may have felt inclined to condemn social reunions, from which he was himself debarred. Nevertheless, it is highly necessary for us, at all times and in all places, to *keep our outer court;* that so, by GOD'S blessing, we may escape "the corruption, that is in the world through lust."

thou art become degenerate in thy conversation? Art thou then that city, to which other cities once resorted to learn an example of sobriety, of seriousness, of wisdom, of reserve? And from whence is it, that thou too hast given way to licentiousness? Already, for some years past, both in thy public as well as private reunions, it is recklessly on the advance: and, if left to go on unrestrained, what will come of it? *How is the faithful city become an harlot?* (Isa. i. 21.) Ay, Pisa is now that city—once *the faithful city*, and, no less to her praise, the city *full of judgment*—because too free an intercourse between the sexes is found, on experience, to be the first step in the downward course to the sin of fornication. . . . .

7. But we very often hear people say, "What great harm is there in a mere carnal frailty? Blasphemies, perjuries, enmities, and robberies—these we can well understand to be most grievous offences: but what great harm is a mere carnal frailty, especially when it hurts nobody else?" What great harm is a mere carnal frailty? Oh, ye Angels above our heads, I leave it to you to speak! Do you proclaim the greatness of that harm, of which most people in these days think so lightly. Was it not you, who formerly let loose the cataracts of heaven, that with a deluge they might overwhelm the earth? Wherefore did ye this? Speak. Was it not, because of this very vice, which is now made nothing of? At the time of the deluge, surely other kinds of offences were not wanting. There were robberies, there were contentions, there were perjuries, there were blasphemies; there were all manner of sins, excepting, as T. Aquinas observed, the single sin of idolatry. And yet, for what sin, in particular, was the deluge sent? It was for a sin of the flesh. The Scripture affirms this, and holy men attest it; *All flesh had corrupted its way.* (Gen. vi. 12.) If the waters descended in such torrents, it was to sweep away all this stench and filthiness. And still you say, what so great harm is there in a mere carnal frailty? Only try to assemble together in your imagination those innumerable corpses, which you see floating yonder, in so vast an ocean; collect them all into one: and then, shuddering with horror at the enormous pile raised

before your eyes, as it almost touches the sky, call the crime, which could draw down such a punishment, call it "a little sin." You attach no importance to this vice, because it is now become so common in the land: and I tell you, that, because it is become so common in the land, you have the very reason to dread it. Never was a chastisement, so frightful, so marvellous in its character, inflicted upon the earth, while fornication was the sin only of a few: when it became universal, then came the deluge. . . . .

This, in short, is that sin, which beyond every other debases the noble spirit, that is inherent in man: this is that, which, most of all, clouds his imagination: this is that, which, most of all, damages his intellect: this is that, which, while it makes him in his affections like to the brute beasts, entails upon him in a very short time the loss of every thing dear to him. This robs him of his time; this robs him of his property; this robs him of his reputation; this robs him of his tranquillity; this robs him of his health; this robs him of his judgment; this robs him of his independence: in a word, this ultimately robs him of his whole self: for it is this, which with a facility, beyond what any other sin possesses, hurries him on to a hopeless grave. Hear what the preacher declares; "Give not thy soul unto harlots in any wise, lest thou destroy thyself" (Ecclus. ix. 6, Vulg.): he does not say, destroy thy property; but "thyself." Let every one, therefore, be on his guard. For to be allowed to sink into this deep pit of carnality is perhaps the very sorest punishment, which an angry God can bring upon a man; *He that is abhorred of the Lord shall fall therein.*[1] (Prov. xxii. 14.)

[1] The public attention having been recently called to the undisputed fact of the wide increase in our populous cities and even country parishes of the deadly sins of *fornication* and *adultery*, no apology may now be required for the "plainness of speech," with which here, as in other sermons, Segneri faithfully denounces "the great social evil." It is indeed a most serious practical question, how far the lamentable increase and prevalence among us of that evil may not be traced to the influence of a feeling of delicacy, excluding from our pulpits any particular warnings and lessons on the Seventh Commandment. Such a feeling, however commendable to the motives suggesting it, was certainly unknown to the Apostles and to the first teachers of the Church; and our Reformers of ever blessed memory understood it not. Witness the Homily (B. i., 11) "Against whoredom and adultery." Paley, it may be observed,

Who now is the person among you, that wishes in sincere good earnest to escape this pit? He it is, who does not continually go, as people now-a-days commonly do, and sport upon its very brink.

has two excellent sermons, preached by him with the same design. These, while they bear witness to his own sense of duty in leading him publicly to warn his people against this great sin, furnish at the same time an admirable model of the manner, in which a topic of such confessed difficulty may best be handled.

SERMON XVII.

ON THE INGRATITUDE OF MAN TOWARDS GOD.

S. Luke iv. 29.

"And they rose up, and thrust Him out of the city, and led Him unto the brow of the hill, on which their city was built, that they might cast Him down headlong."

1. Let the ingratitude of man come forward and take its trial: for I summon it here, my brethren, to appear before you, to answer, to stand on its defence. To-day, for the first time, we come in contact with a kind of people, daring enough —Alas! the vile example they give us!—to lay violent hands upon Christ; who assault Him in their fury, arrest Him in their insolence, and drag Him, as their prisoner, to the summit of the precipice, *that they may cast Him down headlong.* But softly awhile. Is not this the glorious Messiah, whose coming was so ardently desired, so earnestly implored, and by dint of so much importunity at last obtained? Yes; it is He. And is this the entertainment the world now gives Him? Ah, ye heavens, ye had good reason to keep Him to yourselves with such relentless tenacity! Only, supposing you to have known the treatment, in store for Him on the earth, how could you ever consent to surrender Him? Be it however so, as the sin of mankind absolutely demands it. Let the innocent die the death; and, to get rid of Him as quickly as possible, away with Him to the mountain's brow; down with Him from the precipice! But where, in the

meanwhile, shall we find the men bold enough to take the lead in this outrage? Let us just see. Whence shall the monsters come, from what nation, what city, what family—not to say, from what savage lair in the cave or forest? Compel me not, I implore you, my brethren, to tell you this; for it will make the hairs of your head bristle with amazement, and the blood of your veins congeal with horror. His own country Nazareth is the first to lay hands upon Him to put Him to death!

It is here then, on this spot, that I would impeach the ingratitude of men this morning, and put it to shame. What! Nazareth, the city, indebted to CHRIST beyond all other cities in Palestine; the city, from which He would borrow His surname; the city, in which He would fix His abode—Nazareth to be the first in arms against Him; the first to cry Him down, to persecute Him with such extreme barbarity! Had an enmity, such as this, been displayed against Him by a set of strangers, under no obligation whatever to Him for any favours, whom He had rather left to be the very refuse of the earth, I could almost find it in my heart to forgive them: but that the Nazarites should betray such enmity! It is too shocking, too outrageous. And yet, woe is me! For, if I am to condemn them, I must needs at the same time condemn many others too. Pardon the freedom, I allow myself, brethren, in speaking to you thus. At the present day we are come to such a pass, that the persons, whom CHRIST has most obliged, usually prove His deadliest enemies. I would speak plainly. The most privileged by their rank, the most eminent for their popularity, the most independent for their riches, the most illustrious for their birth, these are the people, 'tis often found, to insult Him with the most bitter animosity. What then have we to do? We must class all such persons with these wicked Nazarites; and then, speaking in general terms, so as to give no personal offence, we must proceed to show the excessive ingratitude it betrays to render to a GOD so merciful evil for good.

2. But I no sooner take upon myself to demonstrate this proposition, than I find cause to repent. For what is the place, my brethren, in which we are assembled? Where is

it, that we are now speaking? Among wild beasts, or men? Among savages, or Christians? This truly is an argument, which might very properly be debated before an audience of Hyrcanian tigers, or Libyan lions, or dragons of Lernea. And, supposing they had any share of reason, I should not despair of convincing them of the enormous ingratitude, which men show in rendering evil to a Being, who is for ever occupied in doing us good. Methinks however, that, monsters as they are, they would turn a deaf ear to my severe reproof, and satisfy me by a host of witnesses, as to their abhorrence of all such ingratitude, the love they bear to their benefactors, the disinclination they feel to harm them. They would plead in their defence that remarkable testimony of Seneca; "Brute beasts are sensible of kindness; nor is there any animal so intractable, as not to be won by gentle treatment, and made to love us." They would remind me of the favour, shown by Hanno the Carthaginian to lions; a favour, so marked, as to raise a suspicion among his countrymen, that, since savage beasts were obedient to him, no man would have strength to overcome him. They would tell me the story of the caresses, which a Syrian lion bestowed on a certain Mentor of Syracuse, because he had extracted a thorn from its foot; they would refer me to the good services done by another lion in Africa to a certain Elpis of Samos, because he had pulled a bone out of its throat. They would narrate to me, how a panther in the wild woods became the companion and even the protector of a man, because he had kindly lifted her cubs out of a pit. They would call to my recollection the dragon of Arcadia, that rescued its feeder Toantes from the attack of robbers; and the lion of Rome, who defended its benefactor, when a condemned convict, from the jaws of the other wild beasts; and would re-echo in my ears the loud acclamations, which expressed the delight of the whole amphitheatre on beholding so extraordinary a scene. Confounded by such an accumulation of facts, how shall I be able to answer them? Should I deny the truth of their statements? Then, to be consistent, I must cast a doubt, not only on the veracity of a Pliny, who was indeed suspected of being now and then over-credulous, but of a Seneca, of a Gellius, of an Aristotle,

of a Cassiodorus, of a William of Paris, of an Isidore of Pelusium, yea, of the great Basil himself, all of whom attested these facts. But, should I yield the point, in what a predicament I should be! It would then be necessary for me to re-ascend this pulpit, and, like one frantic, to cry aloud to all present—Ah! the hearts of men! Ah, the hearts of Christian men! Come with me. I want you to accompany me yonder to those rocks, to those ravines, to those caverns, there to learn from the wild beasts the gratitude, which it behoves you to show towards God. These same beasts, when treated kindly by you, become, if any thing, more tame; they recognise your voice; they obey your dumb signs; they follow your steps: and they do not grind their teeth to tear you in pieces, when you hold out your hand to feed them. "Even brute beasts are sensible of kindness." And you act the very contrary to this in your behaviour towards God. What does not God do, that He may gain your hearts, O ye sinners? What, I ask, does He not do? He is ever on the watch above, waiting to bless you, just as if you were His only care; and, far from being satisfied with providing against your mere necessities, He wishes you all possible happiness. Hence how richly has He stored the earth for your benefit! There are animals without number, some for entertainment, others for use; plants of every variety, some for necessity, others for ornament; mines inexhaustible, some for wealth, others for medicine. He has placed the different elements, every one of them, under your command, each to bring you its own valuable tribute. For you it is, that He retains so many noble heavenly intelligences in constant service: for you it is, that He keeps so many planets in perpetual motion, and so many brilliant stars ever on the watch. Never will He allow the rivers or the seas a moment's repose: these also must be constantly at work for your advantage either to fertilize your meadows, to temper your climate, to convey your merchandize, or to appease your hunger. In short, for your sakes, He holds the universe of created things in ceaseless agitation.

And, while He is thus blessing you with such an open bountiful hand, you are doing every thing to offend Him;

nay more, the more His liberality abounds towards you, the greater is your boldness in offending and insulting Him. This really seems something so extravagantly monstrous on your part, that, supposing me to be born but this day into the world and to hear it stated, I could never believe it: and, were a writer of such allowed authority, as Lactantius, to meet me with this question, whether I was unacquainted with the fact, namely, "that God is chiefly forgotten by men at those very seasons, when living in the enjoyment of His blessings they ought most to honour Him for His Divine bounty," I think that I should tell him flatly, I did not believe him; that the thing was downright false; that it was quite impossible; that it was the fabrication of some corrupt mind, or, at least, the hyperbole of some reckless tongue. But woe is me! For, were he, in proof of his assertion, to appeal to the concurrent testimony of past ages, I should be compelled, after all, to acknowledge myself beaten, and that he was in the right.

3. Are we then strangers to the fact that men are most inclined to wickedness, in the time of their prosperity? Hear how God complains of this by the mouth of Jeremiah; *They are become great and waxen rich; they are waxen fat, they shine.* Hence, what followed? *They overpass the deeds of the wicked* (v. 27, 28). The Israelites, in their squalid and most degraded condition of bondage in Egypt, so constantly kept their faith with God, as never once, according to the verdict of all writers, to commit the very smallest act of idolatry: but, no sooner did they behold the obedient seas retiring before their feet, and the tributary clouds concocting food for their sustenance—no sooner did they perceive that for their sakes the night was illumined, the day overshadowed, the rocks dissolved, and the desert fertilized—no sooner did they begin to subdue the people with their power and to bind them fast under their dominion—than they instantly in their pride rebelled against the worship of the true God, and offered their incense to idols under every tree, and under every rock built their altars. *Israel is a vine full of branches* (so spake Hosea in his beautiful imagery); *the fruit is agreeable to it; according to the multitude of his fruit he hath multiplied idols,*

according to the plenty of his land he hath abounded with idols (xi. 1, Vulg.) Saul, who, as the shepherd of a flock, was the most modest and religious of men, when Ruler of the people became the most overbearing and wicked. David, who, as a persecuted outcast, was blameless and inoffensive, when settled on his throne proved an adulterer and a murderer. After attaining prosperity, a Solomon became an idolater; after concluding peace, an Uzziah profane; after recovering health, a Hezekiah ostentatious; after bearing a child, a Hagar petulant; after gaining a victory, a Samson incontinent; and, in truth, we rarely find the man, who retains in his prosperity that innocency, for which perhaps he stood indebted to his adversity. And is not this tantamount to requiting the goodness of God with the most odious ingratitude? Hear what we read in Job of such characters; *They say unto God, depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways* (xxi. 14). They say unto God, "Away, Away! We desire to know nothing more concerning Thee. *Depart from us.*" But when was it, that these persons treated Him so wickedly? Was it, when He afflicted them with want, when He brought them low with sickness? Quite the reverse. It was, when He had *filled their houses with good things* (xxii. 17, 18). It was at the very time, when He was heaping upon them every blessing; or rather, after He had actually done this for them. For, so long as there remained any good to be got from Him, these mercenaries these cormorants never failed to treat Him with some deference; but adieu to all deference from them, their houses being once filled. They said unto God, *Depart from us* . . yet He *had filled their houses with good things.* Oh, what a sentence to pass upon Him! Does it not speak volumes?

4. But, not to waste more time in reproaching other people with their ingratitude, when we have quite as much reason to blush on looking at home, in what language shall we speak of ourselves? Ah, my dear Christians, we have but to smite upon our breasts with our hands, and we shall most probably draw them back covered with leprosy, as it happened to Moses. What is my meaning? Why, do we become better Christians, when God graciously grants us our desires and

supplies our wants? Take an instance. Don't we regard it as an immense favour, when He is pleased to send us an abundant harvest? Our longing desire, during the year, has doubtless been that He would gild our fields with a goodlier display of corn, bend our vines under the weight of heavier clusters, enrich our orchards with a still more teeming progeny of fruit. Well; He grants us the blessings we have desired. And now, in what manner do we behave? Do we more diligently attend His worship? Perhaps, as Salvian remarks, we then hasten to Church to give Him thanks. Perhaps we then load His altar with our gifts. Perhaps we then replenish the hungry with our alms; or, at least, we make a sacrifice of some inward darling lust to His honour. Perhaps we promise to lead a new life. Perhaps we enter upon a course of amendment. "I suppose that by the worship, the homage, the veneration, we offer to the ALMIGHTY, we labour at such times to make Him some suitable return for His benefits, conferred upon us." Judge for yourselves, says that incomparable man; so far from it, we behave worse than ever. "Should GOD grant us at any time fruitful seasons, tranquillity, and abundance, far beyond our requests, by such influx of prosperity we are corrupted; our morals degenerate to such a degree of pride, that we totally forget both Him and ourselves." In what respects? you ask. Why, our only thought then is, how we may best enlarge our farms and widen our cellars. Utterly regardless of the life to come, we then say to our souls, as did that millionnaire in the Gospel; *Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry* (S. Luke xii. 19). "Come on; now is the time to make free, to launch out, and to enjoy the world. With such plenty of money in hand, now is the time, we say within ourselves, to perpetrate that act of revenge; now is the time to complete the conquest of that virgin innocence; now is the time fully to indulge that sensual lust; now is the time to gain over that Judge; now is the time to bribe those officials." And so, by a process like this, incredible as you may think it, we scruple not at last to convert the blessings we have received from GOD into weapons of hostility against Him. For suppose that, after a long obstinate war, we con-

clude a happy peace: don't we immediately rush to the theatres, the revels, and the dances? Suppose that, after a severe protracted illness, we recover perfect health: don't we at once fly off to gallantries, intrigues, and dissipation? And is it not often the case that we, who, when occupying a lower grade in society, were so respectful to all our neighbours, on finding ourselves promoted in the world either by some honourable title, or some higher connection, immediately begin to assume consequence, to look fine, to despise ordinary people, and sometimes even to feel ashamed at being seen at those devotional meetings, which before we used to frequent? How is it, that men usually employ the intellect, which GOD gave them for the acquisition of more useful knowledge, but in writing profane sonnets or trumpery romances? How do they employ the good sense, which GOD gave them for the purpose of more excellent counsels—but in evil devices and self-interested projects? How do they employ the influence, which GOD gave them for their wider sphere of usefulness in doing good—but in cruel oppressions and the most unprincipled violence? Need I say more? We abuse health to the indulgence of our lusts: we make riches pander to our luxuries; we tarnish a fair reputation by the bad company we keep. This was S. Jerome's complaint in his day. And is not this to return GOD evil for good? It is doing precisely what that wretch of an officer, named Eurybatus, did; for, no sooner had he received an immense supply of money from Crœsus, than he went and employed that very money in subsidizing an army of soldiers to fight against him. I can fancy I hear GOD exclaiming by the mouth of Hosea, *I have bound and strengthened their arm, yet they have imagined mischief against Me* (vii. 15). How often, Alas! may be seen among ourselves this same prodigy of ingratitude! We have no need to expose it further. Let us rather consider how best we may drive it out of the land.

5. To withhold from GOD your thanks for all His benefits, to dissemble your obligation to Him for those benefits, to deny them, to forget them, are not these, beyond all doubt, very great sins? What then must it be to go yet further and, in recompense for His benefits, to insult Him for them?

How shocked and astounded you would be, were a man, on your making him some kind present, to repay you with a blow! Or, on your saving his life, were he, in return, to strike you with a stiletto! But put your own case out of the question. Did you witness any such violence offered to a third person, not to any kinsman, not to any fellow-countryman, nor to any acquaintance, but, say, to some perfect stranger, would you not be ready in a moment to resent it? Would not you invoke all the arrows of heaven, all the furies of hell, upon the head of the ingrate? Zeno cannot speak with moderation of Saul for his having attempted to kill David, just when, with his harp slung about his neck, he was endeavouring to comfort him. S. John Chrysostom can put no bounds to his indignation against Joseph's brethren for their taking counsel to murder him, just when he was bringing them food for their refreshment. I would however cite a case not so generally known.

Basil, the renowned Emperor of the East, went one day to hunt wild beasts in the sombre forest. He came across a stag of extraordinary size. He attacked it, brought it to a stand, and was on the point of raising his spear to despatch it. The stag, however, dexterously managed to evade the thrust, sprang forward, and turning sharp round fixed one of its antlers in the girdle of the Emperor's waist; then lifting him up above the ground was within an inch of dashing him to pieces. A gentleman, who happened to be near, with a speed equal to his intrepidity rushed to the spot, drew his sword, cut the girdle, and saved the Emperor from immediate death. In the evening, the whole party returned to the palace; and, what had happened having got abroad, there was a general crowding about this valiant courtier: all were exchanging congratulations with him that he should be the happy man to save his prince's life. One supposed that he would be raised that very evening to the rank of a chief favourite; or, at least, enrolled among the principal nobility; another foresaw the magnificent presents in store for him; another the splendid alliances; another the distinguished titles of honour; when the Emperor, as it sometimes happens with persons, who have reached the summit of worldly pros-

perity, disdaining in his mind to be thus deeply indebted to one so immeasurably his inferior[1]—what, as the most ungrateful of mankind, does he now do? He sends directly for his minister of justice, and under some pretext of the person's having dared to uplift his arm against him, orders that he should be taken out and publicly beheaded: nor had this order to wait long for its execution, to the utter amazement of the by-standers, who beheld the very man, whom they expected soon to see raised to a share of the Imperial throne, struggling on a scaffold in the agonies of death! Such was the fact. Come now, and tell me, how does this case affect you? Does not your very heart and soul bound within you on hearing such things? The historians, who give us this narrative, Cedrenus and Zonaras, are quite unable to express their abhorrence of such an atrocity. How then does it affect you? Imagine this same miscreant to be now standing in front of you, in what way would you punish him? Could you refrain from falling on him, tearing him in pieces, dashing out his brains? I don't believe you could. For, when I read this story myself, I felt every drop of my blood fermenting within me. I was already aware (for Ecclesiasticus had told me as much), that "a man of an unthankful disposition will *forsake* him that delivereth him." (xxix. 20, Vulg.): but I did not yet know, that he would destroy him, that he would make an end of him. This is something intolerable. But, O heavens, what meaneth it then, that you betray not an atom of these indignant feelings, when God is the person ill-treated! Has not God done you a service equal at least—equal, do I say?—infinitely infinitely greater! What, after all, did the good service, done to Basil, amount to? On one single occasion his life was rescued from imminent death. But on how many many occasions has not God saved your lives from similar dangers? To what numerous perils have you not been exposed, since your birth, either by land or sea, from fire, from savage beasts, from devils, or from men? There was but an inch between you and the unfathomable pit, had God only commissioned some fever to suck your veins, some cough to clog your windpipe, some

[1] Refer to Serm. ii. sec. 7.

cancer to gnaw your intestines, or some humour to settle on your heart. But, in the character of your generous champion, He has drawn His sword, *laid hand on the shield and buckler*, and rescued you from every one of those creatures, which, as the agents of the Divine justice, were greedily clamouring for your blood. He has *stood up to help you*. (Ps. xxxv. 2.) And what return have you made Him for all this? Hear it from the Apostle. He will tell you, that you have taken the hammer, that you have taken the nails, and that you have again endeavoured—(O terrible deed!)—to nail CHRIST to the Cross—*crucifying the Son of God afresh and putting Him to an open shame*. (Heb. vi. 6.) And are you not overcome with horror at such a thought? Do you not burn with indignation at yourselves for this, just as a moment ago you were all in a rage against Basil? And don't pretend to say in reply, that these are mere strong figurative expressions of the Apostle; but that, in sober matter of fact, you have never, at any time whatever, taken away the life of CHRIST from Him. What? Do you then conceive that these Nazarites, because they failed in taking away His life this morning, when He invisibly escaped from their hands, were not quite as guilty, as if they had really succeeded; seeing how earnest they were in the attempt? And you, forsooth, have not taken away the life of CHRIST, because He is Blessed, because He has Immortality, because He is Impassible: otherwise, as far as in you lies, you are guilty of this, every time that you commit a deadly sin; for, T. Aquinas declares, that every time you commit a deadly sin, you are renewing and re-producing what nailed CHRIST at first to His Cross; and that is the wrong, done by you to GOD. "When you sin, you do what in you lies that CHRIST may be crucified again."

6. Be it, however, as you pretend. It comes then to this, that the only return you make Him for His numberless favours towards you is not to go the length of putting Him to death. Short of this, you do Him all the mischief in your power. To blaspheme His Name, to accuse His Providence, to persecute His servants, to despise His Ministers, to profane His Ordinances—are not these the common mis-

doings of sinful men? O barbarous and desperate cruelty! The people of Bethulia, saved by the hand of the valiant Judith from utter destruction, were not content to show their gratitude by only not killing her. They all with one accord blessed her and sang her praise. "And when they came unto her, they blessed her with one accord, and said unto her, Thou art the exaltation of Jerusalem; thou art the great glory of Israel; thou art the great rejoicing of our nation" (Judith xv. 9.) They contributed their costly presents; they did her the utmost honour they could; and, when she died, lamented her loss seven days with inconsolable grief. Nor was Pharaoh content with only not killing Joseph, by whose admirable foresight he had been warned of a terrible famine, in time for him to provide against its ravages: he exalted him to the chief government of Egypt. Nor was Ahasuerus content with only not killing Mordecai, through whose sterling loyalty he had been informed of a secret conspiracy, in time to arrest its progress: he advanced him to the highest dignities of Persia. Nor do we usually find any persons, who can satisfy themselves in producing to their benefactors this single token alone of their gratitude—that they have not taken from them their lives. You are the only persons to be found on the earth, who can satisfy yourselves in this manner, as to God: and, just as if this released you from all further obligation to Him, in return for His unnumbered favours, you make nothing of disobeying Him, nothing of reviling, blaspheming, degrading Him, and count it your delight and glory to heap upon Him the vilest indignities. And wherefore, Oh, wherefore, is so great wrong, done to a Being, who is so good? I know very well, S. John Chrysostom declares, that, were a man to render you only half the valuable services, which you receive from God, you would not dare cause him the slightest displeasure: it would rather be your constant study to convince him of your most devoted attachment. What homage would you not pay a man, supposing him to have given you that fine property, with which God has enriched your house! Only think within yourself. If your health, which God has given you, had been given you by a man; if your life, which God has prolonged to you, had been prolonged to you by a

man; is there any requital of your heart and affections, that you would not strive to show him? And why then don't you act on the same principle towards God; but rather oblige Him to be every day repeating His old complaint, *I have nourished, I have exalted children, and they have despised Me* (Isa. i. 2, Vulg.)? I have *nourished* them with so many natural endowments; I have *exalted* them with so many spiritual gifts: *but they have despised Me!* Can it possibly arise from this circumstance, that to be grateful towards men is something more easy than to be grateful towards God? Were this the case, I would stop my complaints. But this, Sirs, this is the worst of all; that we are often found most grateful towards men, towards whom it is so far more difficult to be grateful, and, at the same time, most ungrateful towards God, when the task, in comparison, is so far more easy.

7. Under the old Law, God forbade the Hebrews to offer Him fish in their sacrifices. Why was this? Are not fish very excellent and savoury food? They are indeed, Tostatus will here answer me: but then, what a difficult thing it is to catch them. They live in the depths of the water; they have their sly unseen retreats to hide in, and cunning ways of making their escape. Let them therefore remain quiet, as they are; for God wishes us to offer Him nothing but what is easy to procure. To the same effect, we read that He never required any of those animals, against which people are perpetually waging war in the forests, to be sacrificed to Him. True it is, that among the Gentiles they offered the wild boar to Neptune, the buck to Isis, the kid to Faunus, and the stag to Diana; but our God would have nothing for Himself, save animals of a domestic and pastoral life, such as calves, bulls, sheep, and lambs; and so, among birds, none but doves and turtles only: nor did He ever, after the fashion of Heliogabalus, command that partridges, being so swift on the wing, or meleagrises, being so extremely rare, should be His victims. And why, even on the more solemn sacrifices, would God put up with such common-place fare, unless it were to teach us that He is not a Lord hard to please? Every little requital we make contents Him; every

slight acknowledgment we bring suffices for Him; inasmuch as He principally looks on our hearts. *If there be a willing mind, it is accepted, according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not* (2 Cor. viii. 12): so declares the Apostle. And therefore, beyond doubt, gratitude towards God is not so difficult a thing, as it is towards men; who, being fastidious, never satisfied, and greedy beyond measure, will not be content with a bare token of respect from us, nor with an empty profession of our good will, but will chiefly have regard to what our hands bring, rather than to what our hearts feel. Only conceive a scholar, or a client, or a sick patient saying, severally and respectively, to his master, to his lawyer, to his physician, "I have a great regard for you. I will pay every attention to your wishes, and be guided by your instructions." Conceive their making some such profession as this, would the master, or the lawyer, or the physician, think you, in ordinary cases, deem this sufficient? Certainly not. They would require, in addition, a remuneration for their services, in the shape of good pay or a handsome present. And yet, what satisfies no one else satisfies God. The utmost He desires, is that we should punctually observe those laws, which He has given us for the good of our souls. *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments* (S. Matt. xix. 17). And even, in regard to these, He does not require of us impossibilities; nor does He expect any duty, which we are physically unable to perform. If we cannot do one thing for Him, He will dispense with it, and accept something else in its stead. For, as S. Augustine says, God "asks not a reward, but only His due honour." And does it not seem incredible that men should refuse Him even so slender a tribute of their gratitude, as this; and that they should prefer giving the first place in their esteem to man, as if those benefits, which we receive only second-hand from man, did not originally come from God, as their primary cause? This nevertheless is a fact. *I have redeemed them,* are His own sad words by Hosea: *I have redeemed them* from poverty, *I have redeemed them* from sickness, *I have redeemed them* from ignorance, *I have redeemed them* from their low abject condition: *and they have spoken lies against Me* (vii. 13)!

Yes; so it is, as long as they ascribe to any other, than to Me, the good I have done them; to any other, their riches; to any other, their health; to any other, their knowledge; to any other, their promotion. Oh, His excessive mortification! Oh, the hard lot He has to endure! Is not the wrong we thus do Him something quite unheard of?

8. And yet there is a step even beyond this. For it would not, in this matter, be so much for God to give place to man. This is the worst of all—believe me, my heart bursts, while I say it,—He must give place even to brute beasts! Wolves, incredible as it may appear, wolves, I say, those odious beasts, together with various reptiles and birds, were treated in Egypt with the highest distinction and even worshipped for their supposed good services . . . These animals, however vile and despicable, could yet exact so much from a race of savages; and all for benefits, in reality no benefits whatever, since they never could have had the intention to oblige. And can God then obtain no more from us, than this, that we do Him no harm? But why refer to the Egyptians? We ourselves—don't we make pets of our dogs and caress our horses, because they serve us so faithfully? And don't we consider it as something barbarous to hurt any animal, when it does not hurt us? We know that the Athenian senators degraded one of their nobles, because, when a poor little trembling bird, to escape the talons of an eagle, sought a shelter in his bosom, he cruelly drove it away. How comes it then, that we can take a delight in offending God, while He not merely abstains from doing us any harm, but bestows upon us the most eminent favours? Alas! I must hide my face in shame for having been driven to such unworthy comparisons; for S. Jerome reminds me, that, "When things greater are put on the same level with things less, the contrast offered by the latter is an indignity done to the former." But can I help myself? What I have said, is it not perfectly true? How then, my dear fellow sinners, do you account for such things? Can it be, because the person, who shows us a kindness, is God, that you cannot bring your minds to acknowledge Him, as your benefactor? Yes, here it is: *I have loved you, saith the Lord; yet ye say, wherein hast Thou loved us?* (Malachi i.

2). God is the only person, to whom we refuse to express our gratitude. To men we are grateful; to brute beasts we are grateful: only towards God will we show ourselves ungrateful; and not simply ungrateful, but injurious, but insolent, but profane. What other means, I ask you, has He left Him of gaining our affections, now that His past acts of kindness have all failed? Answer me this, my dear fellow sinners, what else can He now do to win us? He loves you with an ardent longing love. He desires nothing else in the way He desires you. All His thoughts are bent upon making you happy. And therefore He might certainly have expected that you would be brought at last to love Him in return. But disappointed in this, after waiting so long, what must He do? Would you have Him enter upon a totally different mode of dealing with you?—no longer cause you to prosper, no longer protect you; but leave you to yourself to follow your own course to destruction? Let it not be so, my hearers; let it not be so with you. Oh, how intense the anguish you would thus inflict upon Him, were you to drive Him to such an extremity! For only reflect, why is it, that your ingratitude so mightily displeases Him? It is, because it has an effect upon Him similar to that, produced by the most fatal of all winds, described by Ezekiel—*a burning wind*, a wind capable of drying up a soil fertile and productive, as is the Divine goodness. This you will discover to be the true cause of the bitter complaints He makes of those, who return Him evil for good. He does not complain on account of any loss He sustains Himself at their hands. It is not, because they injure Him and affront Him; but because they render Him, in regard to themselves, dry and unproductive; *They rewarded Me evil for good, bringing a barrenness on My soul* (Ps. xxv. 12, Vulg). Ah, let us give Him ample scope to do us all the good He desires: and, in order to this, let us lose no time in showing Him how grateful we are for His mercies, already received.

The Second Part.

9. I was never more astounded in my life, than when I read in Herodotus this extraordinary fact. That ancient writer makes mention of certain people in the world, who bear so intense a hatred to the sun, that, when it rises, they go forth and meet it in a transport of fury, load it with invectives, pelt it with stones, and, like so many madmen, shoot at it with their arrows. What sort of people are these? you will ask me. Are they borderers on the North Pole, whom the sun has almost entirely deserted, a people, who but seldom throughout the year behold its beams, who have the least share in its genial influences, the least enjoyment of its lustre and beauty? So far from this, the people, whom you thus describe, whenever the sun appears over their heads, go forth to welcome its appearance with the joyful sounds of the viol, the tabret, and the pipe. The only people to hate the sun are discovered among those, who live within a near view of it, in whose mines it generates the richest stores of silver and gold, in whose seas it produces the largest supply of coral and pearl —I mean the people on the shores of the Atlantic. I confess to you, my brethren, I looked upon this, when I read it, as nothing but the monstrous brutality of a set of people, worse than fools, worse than madmen. But is not this the very way we treat God? S. Gregory says it is so. "Those, who are most enriched beyond their deservings by the bounty of God, are the most rebellious against Him;"—they, who receive from God the largest measure of comforts or of luxuries, are the persons to treat Him with a proportionate baseness and contumely. How can we account for this barbarous ingratitude? Let us endeavour by all the means in our power to find out whence it proceeds. And yet we need not give ourselves this trouble; for those ungrateful persecutors of their generous fellow-countryman—the Nazarites of to-day's Gospel—have kindly told us the reason. What induced them to act so wickedly, so treacherously, towards Him? We shall find, on consideration, that they suspected Him to be not so much their friend, as their competitor. So it is explained by the most learned Maldonate. When they heard

Him reproving their sins, it seemed to them, as if He thereby threatened to transfer the blessings of true religion from Judaism to the Gentiles. Hence, they were in a moment up in arms, just as if He was actually taking away what He had before given them—"And they arose filled with anger, because they understood CHRIST here to intimate, that the Grace of GOD would be transferred from the Jews to the Gentiles."

Behold then here, my brethren, the real cause, which produces our too common ingratitude towards GOD. We suspect Him of a wish to take away our property; just as if it would not have been equally easy to Him, in the first instance, never to have given us what now we so terribly fear He will take away. Conceive the case of a father, whom GOD has blessed with fine promising sons. Why, as an ungenerous return for the same, does he bring up those sons so badly, so disinclined to study, so averse to religion, so abandoned in their habits? It arises from a certain fear in his mind, lest, should he act differently, they might take some religious vow; and so in this way GOD would deprive him of what He had before given him. Conceive the case of a nobleman, whom GOD has enriched with a splendid fortune. Why is he also, as a most illiberal recompense for the same, so grasping? so estranged from the poor? so hard with his servants? so deaf to the claims of religious charities? It arises from a certain fear in his mind, lest some day he should become poor; and so that in this way GOD would reduce him to poverty from his former state of affluence. This is one of the chief reasons, why men behave so very meanly towards GOD. They suspect Him to be their enemy, after all He has done to prove Himself their friend. Only allow such a distrust of GOD once to possess your mind; and its consequences will be most fatal. Into what enormities may it not betray us? Into what criminal excesses may it not plunge us headlong?

Let us trace this in the life of Jeroboam, whose history would be scarcely credible, were it not a matter of faith, as being recorded in the Scriptures, where you may read it for yourselves at 1 Kings xii. Jeroboam was the servant of

Solomon, so entirely devoted to his interests, that the possibility of his succeeding his master in the greater part of his kingdom must have been the very last thing he would ever dream of. Be this as it may, God sent Ahijah the prophet expressly to assure him, during Solomon's life-time, that he should be set over ten tribes; since two tribes were to be reserved, for David's sake, to his grandson Rehoboam; that of Judah the chiefest, and that of Benjamin the least among them. On the death of Solomon, God immediately kept this promise to the letter. Who now, under such circumstances, would not have felt certain that the new Sovereign would henceforth put his trust in God, in preference to any one else? God by a special act of grace had elected him to this high honour. God had actually invested him with its prerogatives. God, by inclining the hearts of his subjects to his allegiance, had confirmed him in its full possession. And, besides all this, God had revealed to him that, on his only continuing faithful, the sceptre should not depart from his house; that He Himself would direct him in counsel, defend him in war, and deliver him in the hour of danger; in a word, that He would abundantly gratify every wish he could reasonably entertain; *Thou shalt reign according to all thy soul desireth.* Surely every person, on knowing this, would say, "Well, we may be quite confident that Jeroboam will manage to keep on good terms with God. Oh, what a devout Prince we shall have! Oh, how religious, how well behaved, how zealous he will be!" And yet, who would have believed it?—Only a short time elapsed, and there was not a human being, upon whom this wretch began to look with greater suspicion, jealousy, and distrust, than he did upon God. Scarcely seated on his throne he must needs fancy, that, if he allowed the ten tribes still to attend the stated feasts and sacrifices at Jerusalem, such a liberty might ultimately pave the way for their rebelling against him, and renewing their allegiance to Rehoboam, their natural prince; by reason of the inclination all people have more readily to obey one born, than one made their king. Accordingly, by a public decree he interdicts all pilgrimages to the temple, all attendance on its worship: but then, on the other hand,

considering it to be necessary that his subjects should have some sort of religious worship, whether true or false, to keep them under the restraints of conscience, to put them in fear, or, at least, so to occupy their thoughts, as to give them a disrelish and want of pluck for a mutiny and insurrection, what does this reckless politician do? He makes two golden calves; one of them he places in Dan, the other in Bethel. Then, after he had assembled the tribes at a most solemn sacrifice, "*Behold,*" he cries aloud in the midst of them, "*Behold thy Gods, O Israel, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt,* and which fed thee in the wilderness. Now therefore take good notice, these are to be your gods, to whom you must for the future burn your incense. It is to them you must present your oblations. It is to them you must offer your prayers. And so there will be no more long, tiresome, needless journeys for you to make to Jerusalem." Could he have adopted a more artful policy? By this manœuvre he succeeded in alienating his subjects, as a body, from the worship of the true God: and, as for himself, there were no reproofs, no menaces, no chastisements, no supernatural signs, which could ever induce him to place the least reliance on God: on the contrary, to his very last hour he stood in apprehension of Him, just as if God had been, of all others, his greatest opponent, rather than his most signal benefactor. Would you believe it possible, Christians, that any man could carry his distrust to such a length? And yet, it is with us a matter of faith that Jeroboam really did so; and the Nazarenes also in to-day's Gospel did the same: and, like these persons, Oh, how many, Oh, how many are doing the very same thing, secretly at least in their minds, if not openly in the sight of the world!

10. Sinners, ye most ungrateful among men, wherefore all this distrust? If God did not take a delight in seeing you happy, why should He ever have dealt with you so tenderly, so bounteously, so munificently? Why, on this supposition, did He create you, when you were nothing? And why did He redeem you, when you were in bondage? And why did He clothe you, when you were naked? And why did He bear with you, when you were so obstinately disobedient to

His laws? What foolishness then it is in you, after all this, to suspect Him of a wish to take away from you what you possess, and, under such a notion, to return Him evil for good, as if this ungrateful and offensive behaviour towards Him was the surest way for you to hold fast what you have got, in spite of Him? Did He really wish to deprive you of your riches, could anything be more easy? Why then, to prevent your being deprived of them, do you so unfeelingly rob His poor of their share? Did He really wish to snatch your sons from you, could anything give Him less trouble? Why then, in order to keep them to yourself, do you make a point of estranging them from His service? Is it not in His power, when and how He may please, to divest you of your honours, your connections, and your position in life, even your princely rank, if you have such to lose? Why then do you seek to secure yourselves in the possession of these advantages, by means of such unworthy expedients, to the reproach of His commandments, to the sacrifice of all religious principle? Ah, once for all, let us allow Him to be our true friend, our only benefactor. Let us render Him, I entreat you, love, not hatred; honour, not insult. And so, if the thing be possible, no future preacher will again have to do that injury to God, which most entirely against my own will I have done Him this morning, by proving to you that there are people existing on the earth capable of rewarding Him evil for good.

SERMON XVIII.

ON GAINING A BROTHER.

S. Matt. xviii. 15.

"If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between him and thee alone: if he will hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother."

1. Among the numerous precepts enjoined by Christ, as peculiar to the law of the Gospel, there is not one, in my opinion, which we ought to hear with more satisfaction, and to obey with a more thoroughly congenial spirit, than this of brotherly correction. For who is not conscious how prone we all are by nature to reprove the faults of others? Although the sun be so far distant from the earth and his operations so magnificent, yet the inquisitiveness of man has at length succeeded in detecting some dark spots on his surface. These it has noted down with exactness; these it has proclaimed with insolence; these it has condemned in triumph: and, in so doing, it has clearly exposed the delusion of certain persons, who hope to evade its strict unsparing scrutiny, on account of their high rank or their established reputation in the world. And yet, notwithstanding this, how few Christians are there, who obey this precept! There is at present no lack in Christendom of modern Davids, who commit adultery; but where is the Nathan at hand to denounce them? There is no lack of modern Ahabs, who usurp another man's property: but where is the Elijah on the spot to rebuke

them? Where is the Baptist to confront our many incestuous Herods? Where the Chrysostom, our many proud Eudoxas? Where the Theophilus, our many profane Leos? Where the Dunstan, our many sensual Edwins? Where the Ambrose, our many bloody Theodosiuses? Ah, this wondrous inclination of man to condemn the wickedness of his neighbour—how does it all evaporate either in anonymous letters, family gossip, or disgraceful libels, such as tend to irritate rather than to reclaim the offender! Meanwhile, there is not a single person to be found, who dares go and tell him of his excesses face to face; but all, like dogs unfaithful to their trust, will bark at the robber, when once his back is turned.

It therefore becomes my duty this morning to stir up your zeal in this matter to the utmost of my power. Am I not bound to do this? But then, can I hope to succeed? You will at once stoutly maintain against me that, to your knowledge, a case scarcely ever now happens, when you are obliged by your interference to correct other people; that you have read T. Aquinas, that you have consulted learned Theologians, and that they are all on your side. Well, if this be so, and if I am to preach to you at all, I have only one ground left me to take. I must combat this same principle of yours, that you are to do nothing for the benefit of souls, because you are not *obliged* to do so. And a wondrous fine argument it is! I perceive that CHRIST Himself, in the Gospel for the day, when He would move us to this brotherly correction, does not employ any threats, or scolding alarming language on the subject. He does not say, "Do this, for I *oblige* you to do it under severe penalties." No; He simply states, that by such conduct we may possibly at times save others. *If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.* Oh, my beloved Christians, that we could understand the preciousness of this gain—to save a soul! Take my word for it, you would be quite ashamed to say, "Let who will convert him: it is no business of mine. I am under no such obligation." But let us see, whether I cannot demolish this wicked pretence. And pray attend to me: for, could I succeed in kindling within your bosoms, laymen as ye are, any such zeal, as

befits your station in life, I should not only *gain* those present, but should hope, through their instrumentality, to *gain* others also, who are now absent. And thus I make you my Apostles.

2. Scarcely had the noble-minded Judith made her appearance in the camp of the Assyrians, than the soldiers, even the rudest and roughest among them, as if suddenly smitten with an extraordinary flash of light, were all ravished on beholding her surpassing beauty. When they remarked the modesty of her expression, the elegance of her carriage, and the sweetness of her voice, they broke out with one accord in words to this effect; "Who would despise a people, having such women among them, that for their sakes we should be quite justified in waging war against them" (Judith x. 18, Vulg.)? "Who would be such a dolt, as to despise a people, whose women are so charming? Let their Bethulia be cradled over our heads on the precipitous heights among the splintered rocks, it would not be the least fatigue to scale them, in pursuit of such lovely prey! Forward then. Why need we wait for the trumpet's call? Holofernes has only to plan the attack in the most desperate manner; he has only to order us into the thickest and hottest of the siege; and who will count it anything for the sake of a single Judith?" Thus these poor soldiers talked together in their mad infatuated way. And really one might treat their words as so much passionate hyperbole, did we not know that, for the sake of a fair countenance, wars still more savagely conducted have been occasioned in the world. For whom did the battle rage so fiercely under the walls of Troy, but for a false smiling Helen? For whom, under Thebes, but for a Teano? For whom, under Cirra, but for a Megisto? not to speak of the famous battles between Eneas and Turnus for their Lavinia, between Antigonus and Ptolemy for their Cleopatra? But Oh, ye heavens, how is it, that I cannot now enlighten the minds of these dear hearers of mine to discern the beauty of a soul? What are the Cleopatras! What the Lavinias! What the Megistos! What the Teanos! What the Helens! What the Judiths! Their external beauty was but like the flower of the field, that dies away, as soon as it is born; a delusion of the mind, a fascination produced by the tongue,

a snare to catch unguarded souls. It was a bait, that enticed, but only to destroy; it was a sword, that glittered, but only to kill. True beauty belongs but to the soul, as being made after the likeness of the Divine countenance. S. Augustine inquires; "In what respect is man made after the Image of GOD? In his body?—No; but in his mind, his inner man, his capacity to know Truth." Therefore, if I could set before your eyes a soul in all its native loveliness, you would most certainly be ravished into an ecstasy of admiration, and would be instantly forced to exclaim, "Let us endure toil and labour, let us spend our very lives for the sake of an object so beautiful." This indeed was the prize coveted by the great Apostle, when he wished to be separated from CHRIST for the good of his brethren—to *gain his brethren!* . . . What can you urge in reply to this, ye, who refuse to take the least thought about saving others, because you are not *obliged?* By speaking in this way do you not only expose your own ignorance, as to what a soul is? What idea of it have you formed in your minds? What is the value you put upon it? Alas, your language only indicates the mean estimate, at which you rate it: for, if you allow your pity to be excited, when you see a lamb within the devouring jaws of a wolf, or a dove between the talons of a voracious hawk, how is it possible for you to contemplate a soul in the gripe of the infernal dragon, and yet not be moved to pity it? You are under no obligation to help it. Well. Only remember, that this acquits you from the charge of injustice; it by no means clears you from the reproach of cruelty.

3. Yet what am I saying? Have patience with me; for, if the case be so, I shall present my appeal to the cross of CHRIST, and I shall tell Him to come down from that cross, to which He suffered Himself to be nailed for our Salvation. For how was this? Was He under any obligation to save us? and to save us at the cost to Himself of so great pain, agony, and bloodshed? Ah, surely not. Isaiah exclaims in His Name, "He was offered, because He was willing." He became the victim in our stead, it is true; but because He was willing, which is tantamount to the saying of S. Chrysostom; "CHRIST could have avoided all the pains He suffered, had

He minded only to consider His own interests. But this He would not do. He looked on our interests, and not on His own." If then He, who was in no sense obliged to do this, yet was content to do it, and to do it in a way so grievous to Himself, how can we refuse to exert ourselves for His sake in the salvation of others, on the ground of our not being obliged? Ah, the obdurate hearts of Christians, so full of ingratitude! Behold the utmost, that a GOD, Crucified for our sakes, is able to procure from us in return. We will consider nothing, but what interests ourselves, without any regard to Him. "He truly," as the same holy man observes, "studies beyond every thing else to save the world. His chief concern is the salvation of souls." He looks about Him every where for fellow-helpers. In order to this, He would raise a noble band of volunteers to go with Him. And can we find it in our hearts to refuse Him?

Scipio Africanus, when about to leave Rome on the enterprise against Numantia, attended with so great hazard, found such vast numbers of persons who, for the love they bore his name, willingly, without any view to wages or remuneration, offered to accompany him, that, in order to repress the general enthusiasm, it was necessary for the Senate, as Plutarch relates, to issue a public decree on the subject; the fear being, lest Italy should, to a man, be deserted. What shall I say of a Pompey? What, of a Cæsar? What, in a still higher sense, of an Alexander, who thirsted so insatiably after fresh conquests? This aspiring hero found no difficulty in raising recruits, who would have followed him to the utmost extremity of the earth. Let Libya be burnt up with drought, let Scythia be frozen with cold; yet over these regions could he lead his devoted soldiers, at one time plunged up to their necks in water, at another seen clinging with their hands to the precipices, that obstructed their march. And then, what a proof had Cato of his men's attachment to him, as they traversed the most barren and sandy deserts in the world! Before he ventured to set foot on them, he assembled his army, and having candidly enumerated the perils and hardships, into which he was leading them, he then permitted any one, who chose, to leave his standard. Nevertheless,—would

you believe it?—not even a single man was there among them, whose brave heart did not cling to him, and who, in their subsequent march through a hideous population of vipers, horned serpents, and amphisbœnas, would not have much sooner died, than made his escape from those dangers.

What then does this mean, my hearers, that our LORD CHRIST should fail in obtaining from us what many other leaders, so immeasurably His inferiors, have procured from their people? He too is ardently impatient for the conquest of the world, though from quite an opposite motive; His aim being to save, and not to destroy. And yet, for all this, what is the fact? Ezekiel in deep sorrow of heart tells us: *They have blown the trumpet, even to make all ready: but none goeth to the battle.* (vii. 14.) He finds it very hard to prevail upon a single person readily to follow Him, and nobly to volunteer under His banner—to *go to the battle.* No: we need the spur; we require a positive injunction; we must be obliged to do so. And is this, dear Sirs, a matter for us to be proud of, that we are unwilling to render our SAVIOUR CHRIST any service, save that only, to which we are obliged? Is this then the acknowledgment we make of His claims upon us? Is this then the sense we entertain for His mercies towards us?

4. But wait awhile: for I am well aware of the existence of a more mercenary class of people, who will abandon adventures, to which they are not obliged, when these adventures are not likely to turn to their profit. Still, when they are really profitable—in a high degree too and for certain—who ever declines to engage in them, because he is not obliged? But Oh, ye heavens! Is not then the recovery of a wicked sinner profitable to us far beyond every other gain? It is an undoubted fact, that one such wicked sinner often suffices to inflame the anger of GOD against a whole community, however in itself guiltless. "For the sin of one person wrath descends upon an entire people:" so Origen declared, grounding his doctrine on many examples of Scripture: and, though I by no means pretend to any skill in teaching to be compared with his, yet I too can produce my examples. The Israelites had assaulted the city of Jericho with complete success. Eager to follow up their victory they pressed for-

ward to Ai, a city far inferior to Jericho both in strength and renown. But behold them suddenly repulsed by the enemy, and forced to an ignominious retreat? A loud murmur, accompanied with evident demonstrations of grief and mortification, now spreads rapidly through the whole camp. Not aware of the cause, for which GOD had thus immediately withdrawn His favour from a people, whom He had Himself expressly sent into the field to reap the fruits and carry off the palm of victory, Joshua reverently prostrates himself before the Ark. He prays, he weeps, he humbles himself before it. And at length the truth comes out. And what, think you, was it?—that the Israelites had conspired to make a second golden calf?—that they had eaten something unclean? that they had polluted themselves with heathen women? Nothing of the kind, my hearers. Their sad and lamentable discomfiture was found to arise from a far less aggravated crime; a crime too, in which they were not all, nor even many of them implicated, but only a single individual. The story is remarkable. While Jericho, already laid waste, was falling a prey to the fire and flame, a common soldier of the name of Achan happened to spy a rich purple Babylonian garment among the spoils. He coveted it, he stole it; and, in disobedience to the express order of his General, he privily snatched it from the burning, and hid it in his tent. Would you believe it? On account of this one criminal, unobserved too as he was, GOD conceived so furious a wrath against the whole army, as to threaten them with the total forfeiture of His favour, unless they joined hand in hand to put the guilty person to death. *Neither will I be with you any more*—what terrible language!—*except ye destroy the accursed from among you.* (Josh. vii. 12.) So true it is, as Salvianus happily observes on the narrative, that "the welfare of all suffers for the wickedness of one." Achan stole a part of the accursed thing. And what followed? His crime entailed a judgment on the whole community. Yes, Sirs; "for the sin of one person wrath descends upon an entire people." But I have more to urge in proof of this. On account of one Jonah, did not all, who sailed with him to Tarshish, suffer? On account of one Judas, did not all the disciples, who passed with him

over the lake, incur danger? And on account of one David, too much elated in his mind, after he had numbered the people, to what a frightful massacre was not that same people sentenced, just as if they themselves had been guilty! It is therefore but too true, that "for the sin of one person wrath descends upon an entire people."

You must now see quite clearly what I am calling you to, when I exhort you this morning to attempt the conversion of a sinner. I am calling upon you to deliver every individual of your company from those calamities, which, on account of that sinner, may even now be hanging over your own heads. An earthly judge has no power to punish men for the faults of others. But GOD can do this; and, if we are to credit S. Augustine, GOD will certainly do it; if but for this reason alone, that we have failed in the duty of correcting the faults of our brethren. S. Augustine's words are these: "How do you account for it, that, as the same sickle cuts down the flowers and the grass in a field, and the same hail-storm smites the good grapes and the wild in a vineyard, so GOD involves indiscriminately in the same destruction the innocent with the guilty?" Hear the reason. "It is to prevent people from caring only about themselves; to teach them the necessity of their being concerned for others also; and that they should, as it happens in a single body and a single man, like different members, exchange a mutual sympathy." Is it not therefore quite useless for you to tell me, that you must decline all endeavours to convert souls, because you are not obliged? Why, a common cause is here at stake. What I propose is a public concern. It involves the interest of us all, and therefore of yourself. And yet you persist in asking, "Under what obligation am I to do this?" Only suppose you see a row of houses in your immediate neighbourhood wrapt in a blaze of fire. Do you not instantly run to procure water, though certainly there is nothing to oblige you? Do you not strain every nerve in giving directions? Do you not work hard in lending help? Now all I want is to see you acting on the same principle, in regard to souls. So long as your neighbour is living in sin, be assured, the fire is blazing close to you. Run therefore, strain every nerve, do all you

possibly can: for it is high time you should look to yourself, when the house next yours is already in flames.[1]

5. But this, after all, is only proposing to you a certain negative gain. It is only to save yourself from a particular calamity, and to prevent your suffering. The positive gain, over and above this, of the very highest value, is the point that ought rather to be considered. For, if I am to give you my opinion, the particular good work, which is most acceptable in the sight of GOD and most meritorious beyond every other, is the conversion of a sinner. But my opinion is not so much wanted. Hear what Gregory the Great declares; "Let the man, who, by the grace of GOD, has cast off the bondage of sin from his own soul, apply himself to encourage other sinners to seek forgiveness: "For there is no sacrifice," he goes on to say, "so acceptable to GOD, as a zeal to save souls." And, in truth, from what other good work can you expect such an amount of merit? You say perhaps—from fasting. But who was ever stricter in fasting, than CHRIST, who accordingly passed entire months without tasting food—*when He had fasted forty days* (S. Matt. iv. 2)—and yet, to save souls, He frequented the publican's table, sumptuous as it was, and laying aside His usual strictness ate and drank so cheerfully, as to incur the odium of being "a gluttonous man." Perhaps then—from praying. But who was ever more devoted to prayer, than CHRIST, who accordingly passed whole nights without taking rest—*He continued all night in prayer to God* (S. Luke vi. 12)—and yet, to save souls, He received even midnight visits from Nicodemus and persons of his stamp, being ready to break off His own fervent supplications, that He might patiently listen to their discourse, allowing them to prolong it, though it betrayed so much stupidity. Well, perhaps—from almsgiving. The great Chrysostom shall decide this point between us, himself one of the most warm-hearted tender friends, the poor were ever blessed with. Yet, notwithstanding this, hear what he says; "You may spend magnificent fortunes in charity to the poor; but you will be doing more good by converting a single soul." He asserts, that "the conversion of one soul exceeds in value

[1] *Nam tua res agitur, paries cum proximus ardet.—Horat.* (Lib. i. Ep. 18.)

the utmost bounty in almsgiving." Nor is there any thing to surprise us in this: for he, who relieves the poor, has stayed a sense of hunger; but he, who reclaims an erring brother, has destroyed the power of sin. One has saved bodies from pain; the other, souls from Hell. Oh, the difference there is, my hearers, between saving bodies from a momentary suffering, and saving souls from an Everlasting fire! If, therefore, we are to judge of the value of any good work by the extent of the advantage it confers, can it once admit of a question, that to rescue souls ruined by sin is something far more meritorious,[1] than to relieve bodies oppressed with indigence?

You may however urge, that the building of Churches, the endowment of Chapels, the enriching of Sacristies, after the splendid example of the Charlemagnes, the Carlomans, and the Pepins, would be an act of still greater merit before GOD. No, no; my hearers. The wretched sinner, whom you present unto Him, and humbly cast at His feet, in the character of a true penitent, would prove an offering far more precious, than any of these. For are you aware of the ultimate consequences, to which this would lead? Precisely such, as befell Cimon the famous Greek General, as Plutarch beautifully tells the story. Cimon had gained a signal victory over the Persians; and having, on his return to Athens, to part company with the principal officers, his comrades in the war, he collected together the spoils they had taken, and

[1] The word *meritorious* is retained in the translation under the protest and disclaimer, set forth in the following passage, extracted from the sermon of our excellent Dr. Horneck on S. Matt. v. 7. "It is remarkable, that of 'the merciful' it is here said, that they shall 'obtain *mercy*'—*mercy*, not wages. GOD will reward their mercifulness; but that recompense shall be matter of mercy, not of debt. It is the glory of our religion that our people can be merciful without an opinion of *merit*, and 'give their goods to feed the poor' from a pure principle of love to GOD." Conf. 2 Tim. i. 16—18.

As the doctrine of the Church of Rome on this subject has been, more or less, popularly misunderstood among us, it may be proper and candid here to remark, that the good works, regarded by her, as *meritorious* and deserving the rewards of heaven, are the works, wrought by a justified person through the grace of GOD, and then offered and accepted in union with the infinite merits of our SAVIOUR. In our view, all merit, of whatsoever kind, in man, is excluded.

divided them all into two lots. On one side he arranged the trophies of the vanquished foe—shields, helmets, cuirasses, scimitars, quivers of untold value, gorgeous purple robes, vessels of silver, collars of gold. On the opposite side he placed a multitude of prisoners; but all of them in a state of nudity, so that it was quite pitiful to look at them, as they stood there, sadly disfigured by their wounds, and emaciated through the hardships of the campaign. Then, turning to his brother officers; "Choose," he said, "between the two. To me, as Commander-in-chief, the refusal properly belongs; but I surrender it to you." The officers proceeded to deliberate; when, dazzled with the shining silver and the magnificent gold, without the least hesitation they fixed their choice on the costly trophies; laughing within themselves at Cimon, for whom nothing was now left for his share, but a beggarly refuse of denuded men, as good as half dead. But what followed? Cimon, having got them all healed of their wounds, for every single one of their company straightway obtained so large a ransom, as to prove the far superior value, which a human being possesses, from his very nature, over any other species of property. Are you now willing, my hearers, to act upon my advice? Take in, then, a stock of sinners; take the most ill-favoured, take the most wretched, the most destitute you can lay your hands on in all the city. Set to work in getting them healed; and, when this is done, bring them to CHRIST: and rest fully assured, that for every one of their number He will bestow on you a reward, far exceeding what He would ever give, were you to go to Him laden with jewels and pearls of the most transcendent rarity and costliness.

Are these things really so? Why then, let us apply the matter under discussion between us. If to procure our neighbour's salvation, to *gain a brother*, be a work of such rare merit, as to be greater than fasting, greater than praying, greater than almsgiving—in a word, to surpass every other virtuous action we can perform—how is it possible for you, knowing this, as you do, to decline engaging in it, because you are not obliged? Seemeth this to you a sufficient, or a prudent excuse? Is it not rather that kind of excuse, which, if meaning anything, would go the length of justifying

you in not managing your farm with so much industry, in not employing your capital with so much caution, because, let the prospect of remuneration be as promising and tempting, as you please, yet you lie under no obligation to be so industrious in the one instance, or to be so cautious in the other?

6. But—to cut the matter short—who ever told you, that you are not obliged to gain souls? If you have never tempted a soul into sin, I will readily allow this to be the case: but, if you have, whether by your enticements to what is evil, or by your supplying the knowledge of it, or even by your mere tacit approval of it, then I cannot exempt you from this obligation. Have you robbed GOD of a soul? You are therefore bound, in all reason, to restore Him some other soul instead. Under the ancient Law, GOD commanded His people, that, if any took away the life of a beast, his neighbour's property, he lay under an obligation to make good the loss by giving him a like beast in return: an ox, for an ox; a lamb, for a lamb; a beast of burden, for a beast of burden. *He that killeth a beast shall make it good, beast for beast* (Lev. xxiv. 18). And yet, there surely were not wanting many other methods more expeditious, than this strict law of retaliation, whereby to repair the damage done to a neighbour. But, let me ask, in what other way could you expect to satisfy GOD for a soul you have taken from Him? Go, I beg you, fish in the Erythrean sea for all the pearls secreted in its bosom; go, and offer to GOD the most magnificent specimens to be found of Phrygian silks, Numidian marbles, Assyrian perfumes, and Sidonian purples; they all are nothing, when compared to the single soul, that you have ruined. "Even the whole world," said S. Gregory, "is no equivalent commutation for a soul." And S. Ambrose, to the same effect; "The entire universe is no adequate price for a soul." A soul restored is the only reparation for a soul taken away, inasmuch as both were purchased at an equal cost by the Redeemer; and therefore, should you be conscious of having ever caused the ruin, it may be, of more than one single soul, how dare you exempt yourself from the obligation of converting to GOD at least the same number?

There must be restitution, my hearers; there must be restitution!—A soul for a soul, a soul for a soul!

Only consider, how many corrupt maxims may have escaped your lips from time to time to the detriment of your hearers; and what scandals you may have caused in your day, whether by your bad life, licentiousness, love of pleasures, and loose talk. And how is it then that, dismayed at the idea of having robbed CHRIST of more than a single one of His followers, you do not strenuously apply yourself, in the hope of being soon able to fall down before His feet, saying; "LORD, I have indeed alienated that righteous soul from Thee. Behold, instead of him, I bring Thee this sinner!" These were the very engagements, which King David, when penitent, made with GOD. He promised to instruct the wicked, to convert the transgressors; *Then shall I teach Thy ways unto the wicked, and sinners shall be converted unto Thee* (Ps. li. 13). Now what obliged him to do this? Was it then the proper business of a soldier, like David, a man of war from his youth, to go about preaching to sinners? His business was not to explain the Catechism, but to set the battle in array, to plan the siege, to head the assault, to order the fight. True; but then poor David remembered how frequently by the publicity of his offences he had caused many to blaspheme the Name of GOD—the charge, expressly brought against him—*Thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme* (2 Sam. xii. 14). Hence, as some Commentators remark, he felt, as if he could never after find courage to face his GOD, unless he were able to sanctify just as many sinners to His service, as he had once scandalized from it. The same motive constrained the Arnobiuses, the Hilarys, the Cyprians, the Justins, who were at first the enemies of our faith, to write so many volumes afterward in its defence: and, if a Paul, that he might extend the bounds of the primitive Church, laboured more than the other Apostles, what was his motive? Because at first he had persecuted it. "He, who was before a persecutor—to use the words of S. Gregory—laboured afterwards more than the rest." Let therefore no one among you flatter himself, as to the sufficiency of his repentance, so long as he makes

no endeavour to benefit others as much by his holy zeal, as he before injured them by his evil counsels, his vicious allurements, and his scandalous conversation. What then have you to do, my hearers? Why further wait? why longer delay? *Gain your brethren! Gain your brethren!* Is it that you cannot bring yourselves, supposing you to have the will, to think that you have the power to benefit your neighbour, even in matters of the deepest importance? Oh, the good, Oh, the immense good you are able to do him! I speak to you, ye cavaliers; I speak to you, ye ladies; I speak to those, who occupy among us even a lower station.

7. I am quite aware that my sermon to-day will be condemned by most of my hearers, as being ill-adapted to their rank in life, as out of character, as over zealous, and better suited to the case of those enthusiastic Missionaries, who spare nothing, but pursue vice to its most secret dens and corners. But you are mistaken in this. Hear the lesson inculcated equally on all persons in the Book of Ecclesiasticus; "Recover thy neighbour, according to thine ability" (xxix. 20)—according to thine ability; not, observe, other men's ability, but thine; according to thy capacities, according to thy knowledge, according to thy station in life. S. Gregory here very seasonably resumes the subject; "Let no one say, I am not competent to give advice. I have not the power to exhort. Do what you can." I readily grant it is no business of a layman to ascend the pulpit and to cry aloud, as we do. Still, how often may you find yourself in a society, where people are plotting something offensive to GOD; for instance, to overreach an honest man, to spread a calumnious report, to contrive a revengeful project, to weave an artful imposture? And, on occasions like these, have you not the power—I do not say to make a dash at these wretches, javelin in hand, in the style of a modern Phinehas (Numb. xxv. 7)—but calmly to reprimand them, if your authority will carry you so far; or if not, dexterously to divert them from their purpose by your remonstrances, or by the objections and discouragements you throw in their way? Thus will you be following the example of that affectionate Judah, who, when he despaired of being able to induce his brethren to forgive the unoffending

Joseph, persuaded them to rest satisfied with doing him a lesser injury, by selling him to the Ishmaelite merchants. (Gen. xxxvii. 27.)

The general advice, which I have thus given to all, I would now commend to individuals. Art thou then a cavalier, with thy girded sword? "Recover thy neighbour, according to thine ability." How is it, that thou canst not reconcile those two noblemen, who are bent upon each other's destruction? Why not prevail upon them to exercise mutual forbearance on Christian principles, before they are both ruined for a point of mere worldly honour? Art thou a citizen, in the midst of thy traffic? "Recover thy neighbour, according to thine ability." How is it, that thou canst not fly to the rescue of that female chastity on the verge of the utmost peril? Why not secure with thy golden key its entrance into some honourable cloister, before it plunges into disgrace and misery? And who art thou? A lady, whom duty keeps shut up at home. This is of no consequence whatever. "Recover thy neighbour, according to thine ability." Oh, the good, that it is in thy power also to do, by forwarding the salvation of others, if thou wilt train up thy children in a love for religion! By this means thou wilt not only easily gain their souls, but, together with theirs, the souls of many others. For, who shall say, whether, as the blessed effect of this religious training, one of your sons may not feel inclined to devote himself to the Church, and thereby prove a most honoured instrument, in his after life, of bringing souls to Glory?

Have you not all heard of Hannah, so celebrated in the Scriptures? By dint of her importunity in continual fasting, weeping, and mourning, she had given birth to a single child, Samuel: when, behold, just as if she had surpassed Leah herself in fruitfulness, this mother pours out the joy of her heart in a triumphant song, speaking of herself, as coming at last to be *the barren woman, who had born many.* But was this the fact? Can a single Samuel be counted, as *many?* Yes, answers Eutimius; "One holy person, like Samuel, was equivalent to many." Who indeed can ever count the many souls, whom such a holy man, though standing alone, might not make holy as well? Thus you see in what way you have

it in your power to gain numbers. You have only to provide that your son may possess this power. But—to speak more to the point—is not prayer to God in behalf of sinners a most effectual means, as S. James taught, of converting them? *Pray one for another, that ye may be saved.* (v. 16.) Paul had some experience of this. Not won by the fervent eloquence of Stephen, he was won by his prayers. Augustine had some experience of this. Not converted by the unceasing persuasions of Monica, he was converted by her tears. And, dear sirs, is there a person present, who has not the power, to promote most effectually in this manner, if he only desires it, the salvation of his neighbours? Whatever the supplication you offer, whatever the act of self-denial or spiritual self-discipline you exercise, keep the salvation of others steadily in your view. On receiving the Holy Communion or any of the means of Grace at church, be intent upon this object. Nor is this all: for have I yet told you anything of the immense benefit it is in your power to do people of abandoned lives by inviting them in a friendly way to accompany you to some church, where you have yourself often received edification? Or, the good you can do them by proposing that they should occasionally go with you and hear an instructive preacher? Or, the good you can do them by urging them to read occasionally some pious book? Have I yet said a word about that supreme means of usefulness—your good example—which you can every day set before them? "Our actions," S. Bernard assures us, "speak more effectually, than our words." Oh, that you understood the far more persuasive eloquence that is to be found in the speech of the daily life, than in the speech of the tongue! Here is that commanding tone, which the Apostle required in his Titus; *Speak with all authority.* (ii. 15.) Doubtless, the speech of the tongue has the power to excite, to win, to allure the mind; but 'tis the speech of the daily life, that puts a constraint upon us. Therefore, although we grant you no permission to ascend the pulpit and to preach, what does this matter? Preach with your good example. Let it be your habit to behave reverently at church, that by this means the people, chattering close to you, may be reproved. Consult often with

your Pastor. Often receive the Holy Communion: and, as a general rule, never feel ashamed of your religion, nor bury it, as it were, under ground, from the observation of men. *Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad, and rivers of waters in the streets.* (Prov. v. 16.) The good, done by you in secret, benefits yourselves alone; what good you do in public benefits others also: for hence it cometh, as S. Peter declares, that even *without the word* they are *won, beholding your conversation.* (1 S. Pet. iii. 1, 2.) Such being the fact, lose no further time, my most dearly beloved. At once begin to pay off a part, at least, of those longstanding arrears, which are due to CHRIST for the souls you have taken from Him. Apply to this business your whole mind, your full strength; and be assured, that this is the best of all ways to recover His favour. For, if Bonaventura recorded of holy Francis of Assisi, that "he would in no wise regard himself, as being a friend to CHRIST, unless he cherished the souls, for which CHRIST Died," what must we, poor wretches, then say of ourselves, who are doing Him every day some injury, and yet hold ourselves not at all obliged to make Him the slightest reparation?

THE SECOND PART.

8. I cannot but think it clearly proved, that no person whatever, though independent or layman, has any right to consider himself exempted from the obligation of doing something, somehow, for the salvation of souls. But in this case, what becomes of you, ye Prelates, parish priests, and regular clergy? Are you to consider yourselves the only persons in the world discharged from so weighty an obligation? Permit me rather with all reverent freedom to remind you of the special interest you have in this inquiry: because, as it bears upon you, the neglect of other men's souls is nothing else than the loss of your own.

Any person, who stands surety for another, is unquestionably bound so far by his promise, that, should the principal fail, he must make a full amends and satisfaction for him, according to the strict tenour of the engagement. But tell

me; when you undertook an office in the Church, whether on a larger or less scale, was not this the very thing you then did? You engaged yourself, as surety for other men's souls; you bound yourself under an obligation to CHRIST, that you would exert your utmost to make them render Him His due honour; so that, on their failing in this respect, you, as being their surety, must be summoned to appear for them, and have to suffer the penalty and sustain the loss. Give heed therefore to the salutary admonition of the HOLY GHOST; *My son, if thou be surety for thy friend, if thou hast stricken thine hand with a stranger, thou art snared with the words of thy mouth; thou art taken with the words of thy mouth. Do this then, my son, and deliver thyself.* (Prov. vi. 1—3.) Gregory the Great, Hugo, Bede, Bernard, but, more expressly than all of these, the Angelical Doctor, T. Aquinas, apply these words of Solomon to all persons having the cure of souls: they tell us that the persons meant here are they, who pledged both their *hand* and their *mouth* for the benefit of souls—their *hand,* by the example of a good life; their *mouth,* by the exercise of the Divine office of preaching. But, suffer me to inquire of you, to whom did they thus engage themselves? Was it not to CHRIST? to their SAVIOUR? to their LORD? Why then is it here said, *to a stranger?—If thou hast stricken thine hand with a stranger.* The difficulty has been ingeniously explained. I don't know whether you have ever been called upon to seek an interview with a person of rank, and to offer yourself, as the surety for some one deeply in his debt. You cannot have failed to notice the joyous smile, with which he receives you, on his knowing the object of your visit; how he welcomes you with open arms and the warmest cordiality, as if he were entirely at your service. But, no sooner does the time come for your settling with him, Oh, what an altered man you find him! He at once serves you with a peremptory notice that you must stand to your engagement. He will not hear of arbitration; he will not hear of postponement; and, just as if he never knew you, he has you summoned, imprisoned, and your goods distrained, to enable you to satisfy his demands. Now, it is precisely the same, in regard to CHRIST. He has the air of a *friend,*

when He accepts our security, but of *a stranger*, when He calls us to account. Such is the beautiful explanation given by T. Aquinas. "CHRIST is said to be a *stranger;* because, though a *friend* in taking our pledge, He will be a *stranger* in demanding its fulfilment: yes, He will be a stranger in demanding its fulfilment."

Oh, ye Ecclesiastics, devoted sometimes to your own interests beyond what is right and proper, you hasten in high glee to engage for others; you desire cure of souls; you get into places of trust: you eagerly compete with each other in the race for church-preferment. GOD seems thus far to smile upon you; He is most ready courteously to accept every fine promise you make Him. He is a *friend* to you in taking your surety. But how think you? that He must needs be a friend, when you come to settle your account? Sadly, sadly do you deceive yourself. Then He will be a *stranger* to you. Alas! He will then be all sternness, and hardly condescending to look upon you; He will insist on satisfaction; He will insist on His rights; He will insist upon all His due being paid, even to the uttermost farthing. "He will be a *stranger* in demanding its fulfilment."

And surely, were it otherwise, how can we suppose that, at the mere mention of a cure of souls, so many persons, distinguished for their piety, should have fled in horror to the wild woods for concealment? Nay, how many had recourse to expedients still more remarkable! . . . . Witness that repugnance, which S. Ambrose evinced in this matter. On his becoming acquainted with the intention of the Milanese to raise him from a secular Consulship to a high position in the Church, he caused a lofty tribunal to be instantly erected in the public square of the city. There he took his place frowning, and summoned sternly into his presence a set of executioners, some bringing their rods; some, their axes; some, their hand-cuffs: and then, that he might obtain a character for cruelty, he ordered the convicts to be brought out of their prisons, and, according to their several crimes, some to be exposed to torture, some to be handed over to death. This device, however, not succeeding, he returned to his palace, and had a number of idle and abandoned women

openly invited to come to him, thereby to breed a suspicion of his habitually keeping such bad company. Unable, after all, to deceive the people by these pretences, he disguised himself in the dress of a common peasant, effected his escape in the night, and crossed the Alps on foot, in search of some friendly refuge among the rocks and caves of the mountains. But all was still to no purpose, GOD thwarting him in every attempt, which he made to escape. Can you now suppose, dear sirs, that men, so eminently gifted and qualified to undertake the charge of souls, would have been at this mighty pains to evade the obligation, were it not an obligation dreadful--I say not to mortals, but—to the very Angels?

The case now forsooth is reversed. Now we have people, who regard the charge of souls, as a pleasant pastime, an easy life, a profitable speculation; ay, there are now some to be found, like that noble that spiritually minded Pastor, over the door of whose parsonage, surrounded, as it was, by the most enchanting scenery, I read these words, inscribed in very conspicuous letters; *Deus nobis hæc otia fecit! "God has provided for me this place of repose!"* Oh, how terrible is this! The Angels, we all know, are endowed with most excellent gifts, the deepest sagacity, the loftiest wisdom: and yet to each Angel but a single soul is given in charge—to each, one single soul! For many many souls is a Parish Priest, a Diocesan Bishop responsible. And can he expect to fulfil his duty with so little trouble? Ah, be this never said of you! Expanding rather the flame of holy zeal, which, I am persuaded, now burns within you, act, all of you, upon the advice of Solomon, given in connection with the passage I have just quoted; *Do this, my son, and deliver thyself; go, hasten, rouse thy friend, lest thou shouldest give sleep to thine eyes, or thine eyelids should slumber: deliver thyself, as a roe from the hand of the hunter, and as a bird from the hand of the fowler.* (Prov. vi. 3—5, Vulg.) The advice may be summed up as follows. You are become surety to CHRIST, in behalf of His numerous debtors. Lose no time then; be quick: see well to it, that every individual of them pays. *Deliver thyself.* Pray, preach, warn, threaten, punish. Allow yourself no rest, until GOD shall have recovered His due honour; until abuses

shall have ceased, until animosities shall be rooted up, until impure lusts shall be mortified; above all, until the rising generation be well grounded in Christian Doctrine; until, as far as in you lies, a holy Worship be fully restored to our Churches, a modest demeanour to our clergy, a sound discipline to our laity. Do you not observe how the wild goats will struggle to extricate themselves from the snare of the hunter? Be not at less pains to clear yourselves of your immense liabilities. *Do this, my son, and deliver thyself. Escape, as the roe; escape, as the bird.* For a tremendous issue, you see, is here at stake. It is your security. "Be not surety above thy power: and, if thou be surety, think, as if thou wert to pay it." (Ecclus. viii. 13, Vulg.)

SERMON XIX.

ON THE CURE OF SLANDER.

S. Matt. xv. 2.

"Why do Thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders; for they wash not their hands, when they eat bread?"

1. Were it ever true, that from the very same flowers, from which bees would extract the sweetest honey, spiders will extract poison of the most pernicious and deadly quality, that fact receives this day a clear illustration in the conduct of the holy Apostles. These poor creatures had left all to follow Christ; hence, living in extreme mortification and debasement, they had not a thought about their own interests, nor the appearance they made in the world. Who then could have believed that even on this particular an accusation should be raised against them? It was observed (mark their enormous wickedness!)—what shall I say? that they had tasted unclean food? or, that they had touched a putrifying dead body? No; the height of their offending was this, that they merely omitted now and then scrupulously to wash their hands before they ate. *They wash not their hands, when they eat bread.* And, whereas, in a set of poor fishermen, this might naturally be accounted for by their simplicity of character, it was denounced, as being a slight put upon Ordinances, a contempt of Tradition. So true is it, that from every medicinal herb the malice of mankind knows how to extract poison. And what is this, my dear Christians, but the very malice, which is now so rampant among

ourselves; that, which clinging, like the plague, to every part of the city, goes creeping through our houses, through our public offices, and, would to God it were not so! sometimes penetrates into our cloisters, however fenced on high to exclude it? If a man is humble, and therefore bears every ill-treatment patiently, they say he is a coward; if he is frugal, they say he is a miser; if religious, they say he is a hypocrite; if modest, they say he is a clown; and in this manner they gather abundant material for evil speaking from every sort of character; as if this would redound not a little to their own credit; as if the only way to raise oneself were by depressing others; the only way to shine in the world were by obscuring the character of our neighbour. And is not all this, my hearers, something exceedingly cowardly? We ought to study to become perfect ourselves, not to make other people appear imperfect. Therefore, with your good pleasure, let me this morning do my utmost to curb these tongues, that are so free and loquacious in the midst of us, and to impose on our evil speakers some degree of modesty and reserve. And, with this view, we will commend to their adoption that excellent rule, David prescribed to himself, when he said, *May my mouth not speak of the works of men.* (Ps. xvii. 4, Vulg.) What are, strictly speaking, *the works of men?* Their virtues? By no means. Their vices? Yes; because their virtues they derive from God. Let those, therefore, who take a pleasure in constantly talking about other people's doings, act upon this maxim. Let them speak of that, which men derive from God; let them pass over in silence that, which men only derive from themselves. Hence it will follow, that from being evil speakers they will become eulogists. I fear, however, that their wrath will be fiercely excited against me, when they hear me lashing their wickedness. I fear that, in all probability, they will make me smart for my pains by heaping all manner of abuse upon a sermon, so grating to their feelings. In spite of this, I have no wish to decline what is my duty; and, provided no one else has to suffer from their slander, I am quite willing to let them rage against me to their hearts' content; for, in truth, there is no reproach I do not justly deserve.

2. To begin—here indeed is a fine feather in your caps, ye slanderers, that you so wantonly assail a person, who, being at a distance, is unable to hear your charges against him, and therefore can neither vindicate his conduct on the one hand, nor silence your noisy tongue on the other. In the Book of Leviticus, GOD formerly made a certain prohibition, which may seem to you but of little importance; but to me, as now personally concerned in it, one of the highest importance and consideration. That prohibition was, that no Israelite should dare to say anything evil of the deaf; *Thou shalt not curse the deaf* (xix. 14). But how is this? Are the deaf so peculiarly privileged a class above their suffering brethren, that, while every imaginable bad language may be uttered against the blind, the maimed, the deformed, and the stammering, nothing of the kind must be said in their single case alone? Certainly not: for we know full well that our charity must be universal; *Love covereth all sins* (Prov. x. 12). Still, if we are to believe Commentators on Scripture, it was the will of GOD that more care should be taken of the deaf, inasmuch as to attack a person, prevented for this reason from exculpating and defending himself, would seem to be the excess of cruelty. But tell me, ye slanderers; is not this the very thing you are doing? *To curse the deaf* is, according to the moral sense, put on the words by S. Gregory, "to defame the absent man, who does not hear." You retire to your favourite club; there, without any check upon you, you censure the behaviour of one, who does not hear you; and don't you see, that by such conduct you not only evince the utmost audacity, but commit a most unfeeling act of injustice. Think you then, were the man present, against whom you sharpen your teeth, you would dare speak of him in this iniquitous manner? Forgive me, if my words are too severe —I tell you plainly, that in smiting your adversary thus behind his back you act like traitors. *When I was gone from them,* said Job, *they spake against me* (xix. 18, Vulg.) If he has any faults about him, such as so mightily offend you, go boldly, confront him face to face, as Nathan did David, as Ahijah did Jeroboam, as Micaiah did Ahab. Set before him the evil of his doings; warn him, reprove him, rebuke him:

for in acting thus you will greatly please God. But so long as you blame him, then only, when he is absent, in what apparent respect do you differ from those cowardly mastiffs, who bark at the wolf, when he is far beyond hearing, got away with the lamb between his tusks, already sheltered in the forest and safe concealed in the cave?

Would to God, however, that you would take a lesson from these mastiffs! It is quite true, that they are silent, when the wolf is near them; they are *dumb* dogs, as Isaiah calls them, *dumb* dogs, *that cannot bark* (lvi. 10). Yet it by no means follows, that they approve of the wolf's plundering habits, that they caress him, that they flatter him; and still less does it follow, that they assist him to worry and mangle the flock. But, after you have been cruelly slandering some person, when absent, either in his public or private character —it may be, for his keeping up a questionable connection, or for his love of play, or for his extravagance, or for his totally neglecting his business—how often and often, when he is present, do you flatter him on account of those very identical irregularities, for which, just before, you so unmercifully blamed him! You praise him for his incontinence, as being the outbreak of a manly spirit; for his love of play, as being a nice recreation; for his extravagance, as living in good style; and you scruple not to recommend him to divert his mind more frequently from the cares of business, the neglect of which you are ready on the very next occasion spitefully to lay to his charge. And is not this to do to your neighbour an evident wrong?

I am well aware what vast courage it requires to go and admonish any person, face to face, as to his faults, specially if he is a man of high rank. To do this, one must needs be a second Elijah, entirely lifted above the world, satisfied with a rough skin about his loins, and glad to make his dinner off the hard bread, the raven's gift, at the torrent's side. But, if you have no heart for this, cease at all events, from tearing in pieces in their absence those, whom, when present, you dare not even prick with a pin. Because, as S. Jerome observed, "Truth does not like to lodge in holes and corners;" and conduct, such as this, on your part savours of the mole

and the rat, who can indeed bite, but only in secret; or it rather resembles what Ecclesiastes asserted of certain diminutive snakes, which bent on mischief squat down in the sand—not a hiss, not a rustling movement from them to be heard—and then lurk for the wayfaring man, to take him off his guard and dart at his heels. *If a serpent bite in silence, he is nothing better, that backbiteth secretly* (x. 11, Vulg.)

And have you any encouragement to hope, that you will find it an easy matter to restore to your neighbour the good character, of which you have once deprived him? I would have you try the experiment with your utmost industry and all your might: and Oh, how difficult, after all, will you find the attempt! Moses was anxious to convince Pharaoh that he was a true servant of the LORD. Accordingly, how did he set about it? He held a rod in his hand; he cast it to the ground, and had it suddenly transformed into a horrid serpent. What then? No sooner did he take it again in his hand, than he had it, from being a serpent, restored back a rod. The magicians of Egypt would fain give a like proof of their power. But in this they failed: for, although they could well change their rods into serpents, yet those serpents would continue serpents still, and never, from being serpents, would come back rods (Ex. vii. 10, 12). Now have you paid attention to this? Origen grounds a very shrewd remark on it; "Behold, to what extent demoniacal influence could here prevail. It could make evil out of good; but it could not remake good out of evil. It was able, out of the rod, to form the serpent; but it was unable, out of the serpent, to recover the rod." Now conceive an effect, similar to this, resulting from your own conduct. You may succeed by a mere trifle in making that man, who has a name for uprightness, look like a most horrible huge serpent; but what will you do, in order to reinvest him afterwards with his former good character? You will find it easy to make that man, who is reputed modest, look like a libertine; but by what process, after he has once looked like a libertine, will you make him reappear, as a modest man? It will be easy for you to make that man, who has the credit of being religious, look like a hypocrite; but by what process, after he has once looked like a hypocrite,

will you make him reappear, as a religious man? The ill we hear of our neighbours is readily believed; it is swallowed with open ears; but, when we come to retract our words, Oh, the difficulty there is in getting any to give us credit, at least without some reserve! "Slander away, slander away," said that infamous politician: "this is sure to answer your end: some of it cannot help sticking." The serpent will remain a serpent still. Who then does not clearly see how impossible it is completely to repair in this respect the damage we do our neighbour. We cannot say here, as we do in money matters, *If I have done any wrong to any man, I restore fourfold* (S. Luke xix. 8). What then is the true method, of avoiding all such difficulties? Not to blame, but to be silent.[1] *May my mouth not speak of the works of men!*

3. But thus far I have only told you of one of the lesser bad effects of this sin; I mean, the grievance, inflicted on the person, whose character you traduce; a grievance, after all, not affecting his soul, but only his worldly reputation, a thing valuable in its way, but very precarious. The greatest mischief is this—the stumbling-block you are placing in the direct path of those, in whose presence you utter your slanders; one, that may even hurry them on to perdition. Pray, give me here your close attention. The persons, in whose hearing you use such language, are either wicked, or they are good. You must grant me this. Well, shall we suppose them to be wicked? Oh, what a rich treat will it be for them to know from what you say, that they have many to keep them company in their evil courses! Oh, what immense comfort they will derive from this! Oh, what fresh spirits! Oh, what fresh daring! And, what may be even worse than all, Oh, the unmeasured abuse they will heap upon those, whose miscarriages they hear you narrating? No sooner was David told of the dreadful end of the wretched Saul, left with his three valiant sons a cold corpse on the heights of Gilboa, than he entreated the bearer of the fatal intelligence, if he had any pity for his soul, not to mention the circumstance to

[1] In the original there is here a play on the words, calculated to fix the important aphorism on the attention, conscience, and memory of the hearer—*Non è tacciare, è tacere.*

the inhabitants of Gath, nor to the people of Askelon. He was loath to give the uncircumcised any occasion to glory in the calamities of Israel; *Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon: lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.* (2 Sam. i. 20.) But how are you acting, Ah, ye slanderers, how, I say, are you acting, when you retire to that coterie of yours, for the purpose of recounting in such fine terms the bad conduct of that Prelate, the frailty of that Priest, the superciliousness of that recluse? Are you not giving the uncircumcised the occasion of a still more ungodly triumph? The inhabitants of Gath would have rejoiced; the people of Askelon would have rejoiced: no doubt they would: but for what? For a mere mishap. Your hearers will make merry at a sin! And Oh, how often do we see that, in consequence of the reported misbehaviour of one single individual, people will make up their minds to condemn the whole order! Here a man stands up and affirms, that they must be put down: and here another replies, that they ought to be got rid of: and here a third party, by way of rejoinder, will have them destroyed root and branch: and some now are even emboldened to utter blasphemies against Heaven and to impeach the laws of the Almighty. Your own experience has full well led you to observe, that no tiresome tree-hopper,[1] in the summer months, as he sits chirping at his ease near the high road, will so effectually provoke his comrades to join him in heightening the stunning effect of the noise he makes, as will a single slanderer excite in all about him a like intolerable faculty of speaking evil. But how is it possible, all this time, that you feel no scruple to burden your consciences with the accumulated heavy weight of all the sins, to which you thus furnish the occasion!

4. If, on the other hand, they, with whom you converse, are all good people, and consequently feel rather disgusted, than disposed to rejoice, at the shameful things you mention in their presence, do you therefore encourage the notion, that

[1] *Cicala* (Lat. *Cicada*,) so called in Italian from its shrill chattering noise; an insect of the genus of locusts, well known to all travellers in Italy during the hot months.

you are not exposing them to a corresponding danger of sinning, just as before in the case of the wicked? In this you deceive, you grossly deceive yourselves: because, hereby they may be introduced to the knowledge of much evil, such as before never occurred to their minds; in addition to this, when they hear you blaming others for faults, from which they know themselves to be free, it is highly probable they will be immediately led to applaud themselves, and, like the Pharisee, to indulge in some silly notions of self-complacency and conceit, pride and presumption; as if they were *not, as other men are.* It will be easy for them to hold more or less in contempt the persons you are blaming. It will be easy for them to cool towards such persons, if before they thought well of them. It will be easy for them to keep aloof from them, if before they gave them their confidence, and, should no other result follow, it is too likely that they will hastily believe charges, they hear alleged, without having first candidly heard both sides of the question, and thus they will do an evident wrong to the charity of Christians. And this is the very thing, which David had in his mind, when he said: *Sitting thou didst speak against thy brother, and didst lay a scandal against thy mother's son.* (Ps. l. 20, Vulg.) Thou didst it *sitting,* he says, intimating that there was no hurry about it, nor mere accident, nor only a few words said; but that thou didst leisurely compose thyself to defame thy neighbour; *sitting* in the ante-room of that Prince, you wait upon; *sitting* on the marble benches of that piazza; *sitting* at the front door of that shop; *sitting* on the chairs of that particular Church, while waiting for the preacher; *sitting* round that fire; *sitting* at the dinner table; *sitting* at that evening party; *sitting* in that carriage; *sitting,* in short, as expressive of the rare satisfaction and huge delight you had in what you were doing—*Sitting thou didst speak against thy brother.* What then? And thinkest thou, that the mischief, all of it, therefore ended here? Not so, thou slanderous man; not so: for *thou didst,* at the same time, *lay a scandal against thy mother's son!* Hast thou forgotten, who they were, that heard thy words? Those weak and tender ones—*thy mother's sons*—(for precisely so S. Augustine expounds it): they, by

reason of thee, stumbled; they, by reason of thee, fell; they, by reason of thee, were betrayed into sin, some more, some less. For "when good men, who seem to be of some weight and influence, are evil spoken of, the weak, who, as yet, know not how to judge, fall upon the stumbling-block." And dost thou not fear and tremble for thyself? Dost thou "drink in iniquity"—not simply thine own, but other men's too—like so much water? Take my advice; adopt the rule, I prescribe to you—*May my tongue not speak the works of men!*

5. But more remains to be said. For the slanderer's tongue, you must know, is the tongue of a viper; that is, it has three forks and three furrows; and by the help of these, as S. Bernard observes, it inflicts at the same time three distinct wounds. It wounds the persons, whom we slander, as we said at first; it wounds those, in whose hearing we slander, since it places a positive stumbling-block in their path; and lastly, it wounds the slanderer himself, since it harms him in a way, which it now remains for me, at some greater length, to explain. But Oh, that I could command such passionate expressions of sorrow, as adequately to represent before you the nature of that harm, and thus affect you with some sense of the incalculable wrongs you are doing yourselves by this wanton use of your speech! First therefore be assured of this, though it be a less matter, that, while you are reckoning on gaining popularity and favour in society, thanks to that greediness, with which scandal is generally listened to, you are, instead of this, getting yourselves most thoroughly hated. At once will it be seen what Solomon declared; *The detractor is the abomination of men.* (Prov. xxiv. 9, Vulg.) For only tell me this. Do you regard the persons, with whom you are conversing, to be such arrant fools, as never once to conclude among themselves, that as in their company you censure *others*, exactly so in the company of others you will censure *them?* They see this—Oh yes, they see it plainly enough; and, notwithstanding the applauding smiles they lavish upon you, yet secretly within themselves, "Only just fall," they say, "under the beak of this vulture—and then save your feathers, if you can! Oh, the incision! Oh, the deep gashes he makes! Oh, how quickly he draws blood,

wherever he fixes his talons! *There is a generation*—'tis thus strongly expressed in the Proverbs—*there is a generation, whose teeth are as swords,* (xxx. 14.)

Nor will it avail you any thing to smooth and gild over your slanders by cleverly interlarding them with a certain amount of commendation, thereby to acquire more credit to yourself for sincerity, and thus to blame on a large scale, while you praise on a narrow one. This indeed is a trick quite antiquated and threadbare; and it would really be a wonder, at this time of day, to find any one ignorant of the fact, that the Thyrsus-staff did not cut a jot less severely, because it happened to be enfolded in the verdant leaf of the vine. What was the plan, pursued by those men of Israel, when, on their return from spying out the promised land, they sought to degrade it in the opinion of the people, who had sent them there? They began with first highly commending it. Accordingly, producing a cluster of grapes of such enormous size, as to require two men to carry it on a pole, and exhibiting some most beautiful pomegranates, and displaying to the public view some figs of the finest quality, "Behold," they exclaimed, "behold what is the rich produce of this land, whither God is conducting us! Of a truth milk and honey are as common in it, as water. It literally does flow *with milk and honey* (Numb. xiii. 27). Oh, what verdant pastures are there! Oh, what charming uplands! Oh, what bright transparent fountains! A more enchanting region you will not find upon the face of the whole earth." But what came next? Upon these luscious honeyed expressions, with which they prefaced their report, they soon after poured such a flood of wormwood—by describing its inhabitants, as being a race of giants, its cities, as being impregnable, its climate, as being pestilential—that all, who heard them, became utterly disgusted at the idea of going there: and, in consequence of this, they rose up against Moses, and Aaron, and even God Himself, in so fierce a mutiny, that nothing like it was ever before witnessed in their tents. You see, therefore, this device of yours to blame on a large scale, while you praise on a narrow one, is not quite so new, as you supposed, but, on the contrary, is be-

come quite stale and mouldy: and, if it is so, what is there to prevent your becoming a less object of hatred? People perfectly well understand, that it is not honest zeal, which prompts you to blacken so unmercifully the conduct of your neighbour. No; it is a bad mind; it is spite; it is malice, under a partial show of zeal: hence the persons, who form your audience, cannot but dread you, as they would dread those formidable dogs in the shambles, who delight in begriming their fangs indiscriminately in every kind of blood; and, when they thus dread you, they must have you in perfect abhorrence. *The detractor is the abomination of men.*

6. But come, we will imagine—what indeed can never happen—that this saying of the wise man has no reference to your case, and that, instead of making yourselves hated in the world by your slanders, you should rather by such means become popular and a favourite. But, don't you know very well, that, under all circumstances, you are rendering yourself most hateful to God? *Backbiters hateful to God* (Rom. i. 30, Vulg.); so wrote the Apostle. And no wonder God should hate them. For this is a kind of vice, which is most directly opposite to the mind of God. And what, asks T. Aquinas, is the mind of God? It is most indulgent, most condescending. Oh, the reluctance He has, so long as we are alive, to expose our failings! "It goes very hard against Him to publish our hidden faults." For He has no wish to place us in a worse condition, than that of our artists, who would certainly feel sorely aggrieved, were you to draw aside the curtain in their studios, until such time, as they had put the finishing touch to their pictures, and were even still at liberty to apply the sponge to any place on the canvas they liked, in token of some dissatisfaction with the painting. He beheld once that prodigal son of His approaching Him, who benumbed with cold and wasted with hunger could with difficulty scarce keep life in his body. Yet, though He observed him in this plight, what, in the first instance, was He careful to do for him? Was it to make him warm? Was it to give him food? Not so, my hearers. His first concern was to clothe him; *Bring hither the best robe* (S. Luke xv. 22). And, while they were bringing

it, He kept him so closely enfolded in His embrace, that none of the servants near, as Peter Chrysologus remarks, could see his state of nudity, or turn it into ridicule. "He would have him clothed first, and fed afterwards." Thus He veiled the adulteress, brought before Him in the Temple, not uttering a word of reproach against her, until every one of her accusers had left the place. Thus He veiled the woman of Samaria, who overtook Him at the well, not charging her with her incontinency, before every one of His disciples had quitted the spot. Thus He veiled the very traitor Judas himself, importuned, as He was, by John—by John, His beloved, His favourite, the treasurer of all His chief secrets—yet, notwithstanding this, He would not make a disclosure even to John, unless in ambiguous terms. So invariably true is it, that "it goes very hard against Him to publish our hidden faults."

On what ground therefore, ye slanderers, can you ever expect God will not hate you, when, in downright opposition to Him, you are constantly going about exposing your neighbour's most secret, most bosom, most treasured up delinquencies? when, more barefaced than Ham of old, you scruple nothing to uncover the nakedness of a man, lying, as it were, asleep, and even to invite others with you to this spectacle? Yes, God does, He does indeed hate you: there can be no doubt of it. For I will ask you this. Do you ascribe it to any goodness in yourselves, that you are not so great sinners, as this your brother is? All comes of the Grace of God. All is His work. All is His merit. And is it on account of this, that you bear malice against any? Is it for this, that you bite him? Is it for this, that you wrong him? From such extreme pride what else have you to expect, than that God should forthwith deprive you of the support of His grace, and, by a just judgment, leave you to plunge into the same excesses, which you have so cruelly laid at your neighbour's door, however flagrant, however monstrous they may be? Hear what He declares to us in the Proverbs; *The wicked confoundeth, and shall be confounded* (xiii. 5, Vulg.) Yes, dear Sirs, the wicked man puts others to shame, and shall be put to shame himself. I only wish I had

time to expatiate on this Proverb, and to show you in what manner every age, every people, and every station in life has constantly attested its truth.

But let the history of Absalom, for the present, answer for them all—a history quite incredible, were it not a matter of faith among us. This man, when he heard of the brutal violence, which Amnon his elder brother had in his cruel lust used towards Tamar, fell into such a rage and took it so much to heart, that nothing, short of the blood of the vile ravisher, was, he conceived, sufficient to wipe away the stain of so foul a disgrace. Hereupon, what does he? For a long time he dissembled his knowledge of what had happened, till at last, when, as we say, the pear was ripe, he invited Amnon and all his royal brothers to a magnificent banquet; and there having commanded his servants to fall upon him he did not so much murder, as mangle him in pieces (2 Sam. xiii. 28.) Now who would not have felt certain after this, that Absalom would for the future be extremely careful never himself to contract in the eyes of the world the slightest taint of that filthiness, which, as seen in another, had caused him such infinite disgust? For, as the wise man says, *Whosoever speaketh ill of any thing, bindeth himself for the time to come.* (Prov. xiii. 13, Vulg.) And would you not therefore maintain, that so tremendous a vindicator of the rights of chastity ought in his own life to be more innocent than a lamb, and of purer white than an ermine? But now prepare to be astounded and shocked indeed. This Absalom went so far greater lengths in the very same sin, he had so detested in Amnon, that, when his father fled from the palace and left every room there at his disposal, with a shamelessness, beyond what is known among savages, nor even universal among brute beasts, *he spread a tent upon the top of the house and went in unto his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel* (2 Sam. xvi. 22). And is this then your Absalom, that zealot for purity, who on merely hearing of a single act of incest raised such an outcry? Was ever man so altered? What a marvellous unheard of thing! The sin of Amnon was unquestionably great; but then he committed it by stealth, secretly, in a most secluded part of the house, whither from a deeper

sense of modesty, on his pretended sickness, he had retired. Whereas Absalom scruples not to commit his sin before an assembled multitude, at the sound of the trumpet, at the call of the crier, ay—the most horrible thing above all, *in the sight of the very sun!* And my wonder is, why the sun did not then wheel back its chariot, and so decline bearing any part in so monstrous an obscenity. You may account for this sin, as you please: my own opinion is, that Absalom fell into it, because for one of the same kind he had raised such an outcry against Amnon. *The wicked confoundeth, and shall be confounded.* To his own brother he had shown no pity; his mind rather was by a public infliction of revenge to degrade him and put him to shame: and therefore God suffered him soon after to commit a sin, such as far exceeded the sin of his brother.

Let us apply this to our subject. You lash your neighbour in such unsparing terms for some infirmity, to which he has yielded, for some sensual indulgence, some passionate outbreak, some intemperance, some vanity, some inconsistency; and have you no fear that God may suffer you, as a judgment, to fall yourself into some still greater offences? I leave you to judge of this; I would only beg you, with all deference and submission, not to have for the time to come such unbounded confidence in yourselves. "Reprove thy friend, reprove thy neighbour:" well and good; but attend to the advice of the preacher just after; "and give place to the fear of the Most High" (Ecclus. xix. 13—17, Vulg.): because, perfect as you may now appear to yourselves to be, you cannot tell from this, how you may behave at some future time. Who would have thought, that Jehu, the king of Israel, who once demolished the altar of Baal and exterminated his priests with such flaming zeal, would one day come to fall down and worship idols (2 Kings x.)? Who would have thought, that Jehoash, the king of Judah, who had restored the walls of the temple and replenished its treasury with such exemplary piety, would one day come with profane hands to plunder it (2 Kings xii.)? Who would have thought, that Solomon, ay, the same Solomon, who in his Proverbs had written so forcibly against the love of women, should fall himself into

that deep pit, against which he had so plainly cautioned others (1 Kings xi.)? Do not be carried away with any hasty notions of your being under no danger of sinning: for in my judgment you are not yet well established in grace; you are still liable to fall; you are still frail creatures: and God grant you may never come to behave worse than the persons, whom you slander! Alas! so it is; so it is. They who, like frogs in the mire, lie buried in their habitual sins, are the loudest of all clamourers and croakers, as if they would cast on the passer-by the reproach of their own uncleanness. The wise man assures us, that the good are always most inclined to believe well of all; *The innocent believeth every word* (Prov. xiv. 15, Vulg.) Thus Joshua believed well of the Gibeonites, Jacob of Laban, Jonathan of Tryphon (1 Macc. xii. 46): whereas men of the worst and most abandoned character, as though not satisfied with the faults, which they see in others, will often see in them faults, which they really do not possess. They remark every thing, they make a jest of every thing, and they will be persuaded of their neighbours nothing, but the very worst. Hear the excellent words of the Preacher; *The fool, when he walketh in the way, being himself a fool, esteemeth all men fools* (Eccl. x. 3, Vulg.) And is such arrogance, as this, to be tolerated in the sight of God? Of a sure certainty, must it needs call down His castigation. For, if, under the Law, He would not allow even the healthy to condemn any, as being leprous, unless the disease were first certified by a long examination under the eye of the Priest, how will he ever bear that the lepers should condemn the persons in health? *May my tongue not speak the works of men!* For to do this is to expose ourselves to a most terrible risk and danger. And here you will perhaps suppose me to have exhausted every possible argument, in order to strike a fear into evil speakers. But only pause for a few minutes; and you will see that what I have said thus far is, comparatively speaking, mere playing with my subject.

The Second Part.

7. I by no means desire the reputation among you of being a gloomy preacher: for to what purpose should I be preaching every day sermons of melancholy tone or of portentous omen, as if I took a pleasure in frightening you, were you to avoid hearing them by making your escape out of Church. At the same time, as I love you, I must take care not to deceive you. Be on your guard, ye slanderers; for the danger hanging over your heads is one most awful. You run the risk of meeting very soon a dreadful end. But how can I tell this? Has then an Angel descended from heaven to entrust me with so profound a secret? Have I received any light or illumination from above to this effect? I have, and even beyond what you intimate; inasmuch as, not an Angel, but the Lord of Angels, speaking to me in the Book of Proverbs, has assured me, that the proper punishment of detractors is a sudden death; *My son, fear thou the Lord and have nothing to do with detractors: for their destruction shall rise suddenly* (xxiv. 21, 22, Vulg.) *Suddenly;* yes; so it is written, *suddenly, suddenly!* Have you well marked the word? *Their destruction shall rise suddenly.* Ah, the shortsighted creatures we are! Whence comes it, that we sit so unconcerned in the face of such tremendous danger? Can God then lie? Can He exaggerate? Can He use the language of bravado to get Himself credited? I leave you to judge. But this tell me. What was the end, appointed to that babbler of an Alcimus, who dared speak so wantonly against the noble Maccabee Judas? He lost thereupon the power of speech, and struck at the same time with dumbness and with horror he died of a sudden attack of palsy. (1 Macc. ix. 55.) What was the end of a Dathan? What was the end of a Corah? What was the end of an Abiram?—those false revilers of Moses. Were not all three of them swallowed alive by the earth opening wide her jaws to receive them? And what was the end of the many others, who also slandered the same Moses in the land of Edom? Answer me this. Cannot one among you recollect it? Why, all of them beheld troops of horned

serpents, darting vipers, asps, and a thousand other such deadly creatures, suddenly attacking them on their rear, who, to all appearance, vomiting flames and hurling combustion upon them, in a very short time made of them an enormous havoc. (Numb. xxi. 6.) Hence, I cannot consider GOD, as using the language of bravado to get Himself credited, when He assures us, that the death of the detractor shall be sudden—*Their destruction shall rise suddenly*—this being a fact, not only authenticated by history, but one quite consonant with reason: because, if these evil speakers are a set of men, who, as I said at first, smite their enemies behind the back and never proceed against them openly, but always in a sly, underhand, treacherous manner, why, what is it, if they find themselves seized much in the same way by the hand of death—the only thing in the world to put a final full stop to a wicked tongue?

8. Nevertheless—(you see on what highly liberal terms I invariably wish to treat you)—I am willing to allow that this threat will not, in your particular case, be carried out with such extreme rigour. Before you die, I grant you may have some convenient space for repentance, self-recollection, for prayer that your sins may be forgiven you. What then? With what trust, with what confidence, with what face will you apply to CHRIST for His mercy at your dying hour? Were not you those hard hearted persons, who would never once kindly overlook a single fault in your neighbour, whose rule it rather was always to degrade him in your insolence, to inveigh against him in your pride, and, far from showing him the least pity, to tear his character to pieces in every society you frequented? And can you then expect GOD will show you any remarkable forbearance? Alas! Believe me, this will be your greatest danger, when you die—your entire loss of any comfortable reliance on the goodness of GOD. Nor is my apprehension unfounded: for GOD will then somehow in all His terrific indignation and fury declare Himself to be against the slanderer, as if entering on His special office of the persecutor of all such, according to that expression in the Psalms; *The man, that in private detracted from his neighbour, him will I persecute.* (ci. 5, Vulg.)

You must all be well acquainted with the mighty influence Moses exerted over God in disposing Him to pardon sinners. His people Israel—the fact is notorious—had made a golden calf, burnt incense to it, and offered to it sacrifice. Whereupon, highly incensed He determined to go forth in fire and fury against such a desperate set of rebels, and sweep them clean from the earth. And yet, would you believe what I say? Moses no sooner steps forward with a few appropriate words of prayer and intercession in their favour, than, without a single word to the contrary, he obtains their pardon, and causes God to subside into a calm, far beyond that of the agitated waves, when the wind and the storm go down. *And the Lord repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people.* (Ex. xxxii. 14.) Now who among you would not have concluded from this, that the man, who so easily could obtain the forgiveness of such an extremely wicked people, need never afterwards fear being refused? Nevertheless, what happened? A short time after, Moses would intercede in behalf of his own sister Miriam, smitten in her face with a most loathsome leprosy. Let him however entreat, let him press his suit to the utmost, he can prevail nothing. No; he must make up his mind to see her banished from society, excommunicated, and made to suffer for a prolonged season the penalty of her scandalous effrontery. But why so? Had she then committed some crime worse than idolatry? What had the poor creature done? What had she said? What had she attempted? We all know her particular offence. Abusing the loquacity, with which nature has endowed the female sex, that they might thereby more easily second the first efforts of their children to speak, she had reflected injuriously upon her brother for his having married a certain woman, who, whether by the colour of her skin, or by her birth—I know not which—was suspected to be an Ethiopian. Now because this was slander, implying a want of tenderness for the infirmities of another, God, as S. Basil remarks, refused to listen to any pleadings, any prayers, any importunities whatsoever, employed in her favour: and although He was most ready at the intercession of Moses to pardon the most aggravated outrages against His own Divine person, yet

here, where the offence was comparatively so trifling, and committed too against this very Moses himself, He would on no consideration give way.

See, then, whether my words are not true. This, my brethren, this is the appalling effect, that slander produces on the mind of GOD; it is, as if it rendered Him callous, implacable, inexorable: and therefore it is quite certain, that should you cherish any design of having recourse to Him in your last sickness, to get Him to pity you, you will fail altogether; and it will then appear to you an overstretch of boldness to ask Him to compassionate in you those failings, which sprang only from your own want of compassion towards others. Such was the reply, made by a certain wretched friar, as it is related by some most creditable writers. He was on the point of death. The by-standers earnestly exhorted him, to put his trust in the mercy of GOD. "What mercy?" he answered them, "what mercy? There is no mercy for me, who showed so little of it to others." He then put out his tongue, and pointing with his fingers bade them look at it; "This tongue," he resumed, "it is, that has ruined me! This very tongue, that so often helped me in your hearing to condemn others, now itself hurls me desperately into perdition!" He spake, and, to make it more evident that he had pronounced a judicial sentence on himself, his tongue most frightfully began to swell in his mouth; so that, being unable to draw it in, he howled and bellowed, like an ox under the cleaver. And so, after the most agonizing torture, he breathed his last. Another slanderer, a woman, when dying, most savagely with her own teeth rent her tongue into pieces: in another case, a man's tongue became palsied: in another, it bred worms: so unserviceable did it become to them, at their last extremity, in asking GOD to forgive them their past sins. But what can you say, in reply to this? Does it appear prudent for you to expose yourself to such a terrible hazard, for the sake of giving a little licence to an unbridled tongue? *May my mouth not speak of the works of men!* Make then, make this declaration, I say; *May my mouth not speak of the works of men!* For much indeed does it concern you to resolve on this, and to do so with firmness. How foolish!

How blind! How besotted we are! Is it possible we can be so slow in determining, while here, to look to ourselves, considering that, hereafter before the tribunal of GOD, it will be of ourselves, and not of other people, that we must give an account. A mighty serious business truly for us to be at so great pains and anxiety about our neighbour's consciences, when this can only serve to heap fresh burdens upon our own! What advantage has the river, when expanding wide from its brimming fountain-head, it sweeps along the banks, and in its rapid murmuring course carries away from them their dirt and rubbish, if by this it only stains itself, and becomes begrimed with filthiness? Human life is not so protracted, would we only, as duty bids us, spend it wisely in seeking good to ourselves, as to leave us an overplus of leisure to waste idly on the doings of others. *One thing is needful*, if we will believe CHRIST, (S. Luke x. 42,) and this *one thing* is the work—Oh how difficult, how painful!—of our own salvation. Yet, as though this were a mere nothing, we scruple not to lade ourselves with many needless anxieties, worse than needless, positively hurtful. Let us by all means leave it to these gadding Esaus, their quivers on their backs and their bow in hand, to spend the live-long day in chasing after the delinquencies of others. We, like Jacob, will be rather keepers at home, and in all godly simplicity will *esteem others better than ourselves*. This is to act the part of a good Christian, of a wise and prudent man; but to act otherwise is a clear sign, that we pay no regard to the salvation of our souls.

SERMON XX.

ON THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY.

S. Luke iv. 42, 43.

"And the people sought Him, and came unto Him, and stayed Him that He should not depart from them. And He said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also; for therefore am I sent."

1. Among the many religions, prevailing on the earth, unlike and even opposed to each other, as they are, it is evident that one only of their number can possibly be true. No person can well doubt of this, unless he wishes to run counter to the insuperable force of that reason, which presides over man, or to rebel against the dictates of conscience, implanted in us by nature. For, while we acknowledge that there is, as may easily be demonstrated, but One God in the world, a God infinitely wise in knowing, good in designing, powerful in executing, everything requisite to the right government of the universe, how is it possible, that from Him should ever originate, or that to Him should ever be acceptable, so many conflicting systems of religion—each of which in a rancorous rivalry denounces the other, as being wicked, and false, and hateful to the very same Being, whom they would all alike proudly claim, as being their own Author? The whole difficulty of the case therefore lies in finding out, which among these religions is the true one; thereby to detect those sophistical preachers, who, under the mask of tender innocent lambs, conceal the fangs of the devouring wolf.

But here, Christians, we may well congratulate one another; for our lot is fallen, beyond that of others, upon a good ground: nor is it from any blind flattering self-love, but from the solid deductions of reason, that we give the exclusive preference to our religion; not regarding it, however, to be good, because it is ours; but rather, as being ours, because it is good. And Oh, that I were in the midst of some poor bewildered heathens, for the delight I should experience in convincing them by natural arguments, that CHRIST is the true Messenger, who was sent into the world to announce the Kingdom of Heaven; and therefore that we, who receive Him, we, who entertain Him, we, who are at a strife among ourselves in beseeching Him, with the multitudes in to-day's Gospel, *that He should not depart from us,* are not in this matter the deceived persons. No; they are the deceived, who will not even throw open their doors to admit Him. But why need I travel so far, as to an infidel people for this? Is it in your opinion quite superfluous to advert now and then among Christians to those discourses on the evidences of our religion, which, though they cannot make our faith more certain, may at the least preserve it to us in more life and activity? Arguments, grounded on natural reason, resemble a flame, which warms faith, though it does not enable it to see; and, although faith does not primarily rest on any human evidence, but on the veracity of GOD, yet none ever forbade her the use of those arguments, which are most calculated to convince her opponents that she has reason for believing what she does believe.

Would you not then like to hear me demonstrate a truth on rational grounds, as precious to us, as it is certainly true in itself; namely, that the Law, given us by CHRIST, is the Law of GOD? I really believe you would. For whenever I dwell on this subject myself, it fills me with exceeding consolation. At all such times I feel an ardent longing desire in my soul to thank GOD for His wholly unmerited goodness, in having caused me to be born in a land, where such a Law has fixed its dominion. Suppose then, for this once, that you represent my opponents; and then, like a man engaged in a hard fought combat, who is now on the attack, now on

the defence, I shall have to devise how best I may clearly convince you of the vast advantages possessed by the Gospel, over the absurdities so highly honoured by other religionists. I said, I shall have to devise the means; for you will observe, I cannot well, in a fight of this description, choose my own weapons. On the supposition that I am contending with one, who pays no regard to the Scriptures, nor to the Fathers, I must resign the use of my most effectual weapons. I cannot appeal to the Scriptures, at least in direct proof of my proposition; nor can I quote the Fathers: but, like Gideon's soldiers, I must go forward with a lamp only in my hands; in other words, I must confine myself to the use of that light, which nature has imparted to the minds of all.

2. Before, however, we come to close quarters, I desire you will grant me one single point, which is indeed so very fair and reasonable, that, in the event of your refusing it me in the way of kindness, I will wrest it from you by main force. And what is it? Attend. You must grant that this JESUS, whom we Christians worship, was not the most wicked, the most reprobate, the most impious person, who ever lived on the earth. Do you concede this point to me? It is a fact, that even His worst enemies never entertained so bad an opinion of Him. On the contrary, many of the Gentiles considered Him to have been a most upright teacher and very excellent man. In this character He was honoured by Alexander an idolatrous Emperor with such distinguished praise, and, what is more, adored even with public sacrifices. But I do not require of you so much, as this. I shall be quite satisfied by your admission that He was not the greatest sinner in the world. Do you then at least grant me this? Well then, mark the conclusion I draw from it.—Therefore CHRIST is GOD; therefore the faith He taught is true; therefore the Law He gave is true; therefore, all of you, O ye Mahometans, O ye idolaters, O ye Jews, O ye inventors of new religions, bend your knees, bow down your heads, and one and all of you adore CHRIST! For since, as I have already proved, we can acknowledge the existence of One only GOD in the world, this GOD is CHRIST. Gently, gently, you will however reply; you seem to have a mind to shout a triumph, before the

battle is even fought, not to say, before the victory is won. And was ever a conclusion more unwarranted? CHRIST is not the greatest sinner in the world—therefore CHRIST is GOD. Is there then no middle point between the extremes of goodness and wickedness? There is, I allow, a middle point; but none, in regard to CHRIST. This is the assertion I have to make good, in order to gain my point. I therefore beg you to listen attentively, especially as the arguments you will have to hear are of great weight and importance.

Did not CHRIST then by every possible contrivance always endeavour to be accounted GOD? Surely He was constantly aiming at this, and framing His discourses with this view. Whatever sublime truth He taught, whatever wondrous miracle He performed, whatever severe suffering He endured, all was mainly directed to this paramount object. He rewarded with the most illustrious distinctions the man, who openly acknowledged Him to be GOD, as Peter did: He reproved the man, who expressed any hesitation upon the subject, as Thomas. He asserted His Divinity to the man, who made inquiries concerning it, as Nathaniel did; and He gave Himself out in this character both in public and in private, both by His words and works, so as to justify the particular accusation of His enemies, *Thou being a man, makest Thyself God* (S. John x. 33). What wickedness more excessive, more enormous, or more diabolical can there be, than such a desire unjustly to usurp the Godhead? And, mark well the way of His doing it. I am aware, that in former times there were others also, who aspired to a like pre-eminence, and who employed various artifices and strange devices with this end in view. Hanno the Carthaginian was at great pains in teaching crows, ravens, magpies, and other talking birds of this sort, to pronounce these words, "Hanno is God;" and he then let them fly, that as they travelled in different directions to different countries, they might carry with them the glory of his name. Tiberius, Domitian, Caligula, Diocletian, and other crowned monsters of Rome had either temples or altars, victims or sacrifices, consecrated to themselves. That renowned Salmoneus drove about the city in a splendid chariot, so constructed, as to dart around it arrows of fire, and to

imitate by some hidden machinery the flash of lightning and the rolling of thunder; that so he might induce the citizens to worship him, as Jupiter. Thus Alexander the Macedonian; thus Tesimon the Cyprian; thus Sapor the Persian; thus Heraclitus the philosopher; thus Menecrates the physician; thus Manes the heresiarch; thus many others by the use of sundry divers expedients tried to gull the world into paying them adoration. Yet, after all, these persons aimed at getting Divine worship offered them by a single people, or for a limited time; nor did they disdain to be associated with other strange gods. They were quite content—a known fact—that the Marses, the Mercurys, the Apollos, and the Saturns, should go shares in being recognized, as deities. Hence Caligula, notoriously proud, as he was, in other respects, used to take his place in the temple between the statues of Castor and Pollux, regarding himself, as certainly being the greater god, but not therefore the only one. CHRIST alone would be worshipped as being the One, the universal GOD. *One is your Master, even Christ* (S. Matt. xxiii. 10). Accordingly, He has condemned every other religion, but His own. He has denounced every other faith; He has prohibited every sacrifice, and publicly protested to this effect, *He that is not with Me is against Me* (S. Matt. xii. 30). Nor did He demand the worship of a single age, but of all ages; nor of a single land, but of all lands. *Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature* (S. Mark xvi. 15). Can it then once be doubted, that, unless He was the true GOD, He would have been the most wicked, ay, the most impious man, that was ever born in the universe?

But you have already granted this to be false. It remains then that CHRIST is the true GOD, He declared Himself to be, and whom, as being the true GOD, we accordingly worship. It seems then, my hearers, that I have now clearly proved what I undertook. My sermon therefore might here abruptly terminate, unless you were to play the part of the rudest and most desperate enemies, CHRIST ever had, by retracting what you have conceded, and were daringly to assert (a blasphemy too dreadful to be uttered!) that CHRIST *was* the greatest sinner the world ever saw. I will, however, for

the sake of argument, suppose you capable of making this retractation: and now see, whether I will not successfully contend for this point too, and bear it in triumph from you, certainly for your edification, and, perhaps, even with your own consent.

3. Tell me, then, first, I beseech you, had CHRIST been so wicked a man as none surely ever supposed Him to be, how was it possible, that no mention of any defect or vice in His character should ever have reached us, up to this very hour? When He thus aimed at making Himself GOD, His pride, doubtless, must have been most exorbitant. Why then were no other sins, if not worse in character yet greater in number, found in Him to keep it company? For wickedness, we are certain, never goes alone: far less does pride, the mother and the nurse of all vices. "Pride is the beginning of sin, and he that hath it shall pour out abomination" (Ecclus. x. 13). It gives birth to pomp, ostentation, and vain glory. It brings with it the contempt of our inferiors, the oppression of our equals, the envy of our superiors. It prompts us passionately to seek revenge for every outrage, to be greedy in getting gain and grasping in keeping it, to be impatient in bearing evil and hasty in doing it; insomuch that, as Pacatus shrewdly remarked, when the Romans would express the extreme wickedness of their old tyrant Tarquinius, they decided upon calling him *Superbus*, the Proud. They considered such a stigma to include everything. How then do you account for the fact, that not the slightest taint of any such vice was ever found in CHRIST; and that He was, on the contrary, always so respectful, so unassuming, so meek, so tolerant, so religious? Nor is it the Evangelists only, who, suspected, as they might be, from their connection with Him, of some partiality, give Him this high character. We have the same account from Philo and Josephus, both of them Jews, and even from Lentulus, that Roman President, who, though a heathen, when writing to Rome expressly on this subject, described Him, as being something above human.

4. Again, are we not of one mind in extolling the purity of His doctrine? How then can you suspect the purity of His life? I fully grant, that a wicked man may deliver many useful moral precepts; but, whether as blinded by pas-

sion, or carried too far by zeal, or allured by self-interest, he is sure to allow some sentiments to escape him in an unguarded moment, savouring more of the corruption of the flesh, than the severity of virtue. Accordingly, what teacher, out of the Church, can you produce, who did not mix up with the salutary lessons he left behind him some most destructive errors? Did not Socrates, the reputed master of morality, permit in his laws the promiscuous interchange of wives; an example afterwards followed by Cato, the glory of Rome, and by Plato, the oracle of Greece? Did not Lycurgus allow the Spartans every act of theft, however mischievous, provided they could manage it cunningly and clandestinely? And did not Solon suffer the Athenians to indulge in every act of lewdness, however scandalous, provided they were in the rank of free men, and not slaves? Aristotle felt no scruple in establishing a law in his Republic, that, if in any family the number of the sons should once exceed its amount of income, mothers ought for the future to procure abortion; and that, instead of tenderly nursing any children, who might chance to be born with some members or senses defective, who were blind, maimed, crippled, or contracted, they should expose them, as foundlings? And Seneca, the great moralist—with what fine lofty periods and rhetorical flourishes did he extol that cowardly precipitation, which drives a man to commit suicide, because he has not patience to endure life under its afflictions! And likewise Tully, and Sallust, and Tacitus, and Pliny, and other vaunted prodigies of wisdom—how highly did they commend the persecution of enemies, the avenging oneself for affronts, the thirsting after renown, the setting our hearts supremely upon that glory, which, being something external and apart from man, can never properly be his own!

Now which of all these absurdities will you discover in the doctrine of CHRIST? His was rather the doctrine, which first brought to light the hitherto quite unknown principles of purity, of self-denial, of forbearance, of meekness, of submission, and of humility. And so holy a doctrine—how could it have ever proceeded from a man so un-holy? Had He not brought it down with Him from heaven, where and

from what books did He learn it in such perfection? From what porticoes? from what universities? from what academies? Or, at least, how was it possible, when He communicated it to them, that He should never once have dropped the smallest expression, that was irreverent, or mischievous, or redundant, or frivolous, or absurd, or fanciful, or facetious, that, in short, was more calculated to flatter the ears, than to improve the morals of mankind? His business being to propagate an entirely new religion, one unheard of for many ages, not to mention its being so strict and difficult in its practice, how was it possible for Him to have delivered Himself constantly in such a manner, as at once to satisfy every candid and well-regulated mind?—and that He should, in every part of His doctrine, have exhibited so close a connection in the argument, such an air of truth, such a conformity with reason, that nothing in it appears said for the display of wit, but all for the use of edification—said, moreover, with such a complete adaptation of style, that the ignorant may soon come to know all they need, the wise be always left in admiration of some mystery they can never fathom, and every class of persons find it the instruction best suited to their condition; conveyed to them also in a solid practical manner, quite unlike those fanciful and high-flown instructions, which we read in the books of human philosophers? And think you to convince me that a religion, such as this, originated with a person, who, so far from being a Saint, may with justice be called a worthless sinner; just as if the produce of men's minds were the only kind of children, which bear no resemblance to their parents? No, I rather prefer to believe S. James, when he asserts; *If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man.* (iii. 2.) I can quite understand a hypocrite speaking vastly well for a limited time: but for a person at any time whatsoever, in any place whatsoever, on any topic you choose, so to express himself, that not a jot or tittle can be detected in his words, which does not breathe the most exalted Sanctity—Oh, here indeed is one, who cannot be a cheat and impostor, but must needs be a speaker of truth and "without guile!" "The mask may be worn on the countenance for a time, but never long;" so says Seneca.

5. And yet, during how many centuries have people been doing nothing else but ventilating and sifting this very doctrine, in the hope of making it appear to be all mere chaff. Give me an instance of any other law, on which so many learned men have employed their studies, and even exhausted their lives, with so rich a harvest of noble reflections in their attempts to explain it?—which has been analyzed in so many discussions, expounded in so many volumes, rehearsed in so many Cathedrals, settled in so many Councils, and sanctioned by so many Canons? and which, like the diamond, tested beneath the unsparing sledge-hammer, has always gained in point of credit and evidence, in proportion as it has been subjected to fresh scrutiny and opposition? Just the reverse of this has befallen other religions; for the more their learned men studied them, the less they gave them credit. This was the case among the heathens with Anaxagoras, Plato, Homer, Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca, Plutarch, Plotinus, Porphyry, and Galen, and numbers beside them. When they came to age and had attained to a competent knowledge, they examined carefully the grounds of the national belief, in which they had been educated; and then they came, not only to condemn it, as being false, but even to ridicule it, as being absurd; though it is quite true, that afterwards from want of firmness, or from some self-interested worldly motive they dissembled in their conversation those opinions, which they had confided to their written works. It was this, at a later period, that prompted the crafty Mahomet to vilify all literature and learning among his followers, and to resolve upon deciding every controversy by the sword, which he esteemed in his Koran to be the truest instrument in the world for propagating religion. But what did he gain by this? He was unable to prevent an Avicenna and an Averroes from making the highest attainments in wisdom, in spite of him. And behold these very men, the two most enlightened Moors he had, now straightway bearing witness against that very religion, which they professed! For they did not scruple to state candidly in their writings, that the stupid religion of Mahomet taught a happiness for the bodies of men, such as brute beasts delight in, and not a happiness for the souls of

men, such as all the wise desire, and they conferred on it the signal praise of being a religion not fit for men, but for such swine, as the herd of Epicurus. So true it is, that other religions can hardly boast of a single learned man, who ever cordially consented to make his religion the rule of his own life.

But, if we consider this Law of CHRIST, how many such may be mentioned in a moment! This was commended in the highest terms of praise by the Dionysiuses, this by the Lactantiuses, this by the Arnobiuses, this by the Cyprians, this by the Basils, this by the Bonaventuras, this by the T. Aquinases, this by numberless other persons, all men of the keenest intellects, who, independently of this particular question, were admirably well versed in every other department of science, whether human or divine, natural or political, of their own or of another land. By what means then did a person of this stamp, a man, who was the greatest of sinners, ever contrive to gain the approbation and attachment of so many enlightened persons? to gain it to such a degree, that they dedicated the remainder of their lives to nothing else, than writing about Him, labouring in His service, and preaching His Law? Still, it would not have been so remarkable, had they rested satisfied with barely loving Him themselves: the wonder was the strong desire they had that every body else should love Him, as well; and that, in order to this, He should be as universally known and every where appreciated, as He was among themselves.

6. And where, in what other country, has zeal yielded such a noble harvest? Come, let the Scythians, let the Persians, let the Bactrians, let the Indians, let the Japanese speak; let them inform me, whom did they ever send on a mission to Italy to make us acquainted with their beloved gods? Not one of them was ever disposed to abandon the comforts of his native home on such on errand: nor did they evince the least anxiety, whether their Pagodas were adored by many or by few, whether they were in honour or dishonour, whether they were known elsewhere or unknown. Whereas, how many noble-minded missionaries could I enumerate, who were, who even still are, continually leaving Italy for foreign

shores with no other reward before them, than that of bringing souls to the knowledge of our GOD! And Oh, how great are the sufferings of these missionaries! They willingly banish themselves for ever from the land of their birth; they refuse to be detained by the entreaties of their friends, the tears of their relations, the heart-rending groans of their parents. They renounce distinction, they renounce affluence; they go forth to find a grave in the fearful depths of the ocean, some of them attacked by pirates, some of them shipwrecked, some of them devoured alive by sea monsters, some of them made the sport of the pitiless storm and tempest. At one time they are consumed with heat under the torrid zone; at another they are benumbed with cold under the frozen Triones. Without food, without a guide, without a companion, when once landed on some distant side of the globe—some regions, of which the very sun itself appears to stand in fear—they set out, many with bare feet, to traverse the flinty deserts, the tangled defiles, the terrific rocks: and then, having tracked the savage natives, like so many bears, to their secluded caves, they pursue them, they befriend them, they caress them: and all this for no other reward, than that of bringing them to know CHRIST. And what think you of this? Could a man, whom you suppose to be so intolerably wicked, have ever succeeded in winning over to His side such votaries to do Him honour; persons willing for the sake of spreading His Name and Worship to expose themselves to such severe hardships and trials? Yea more, for this is saying little, to surrender their own lives on His account? Who has ever been known to induce such multitudes, as our JESUS has been able to do, to submit to every kind and degree of suffering, persecution, and torture, from a pure disinterested motive of love, cherished towards Him?

7. Pause now awhile, and listen to an observation of singular beauty. When King David, in order to screen his own character, was anxious to get rid of the unhappy Uriah, do you know what he did? He had recourse to a manœuvre. He wrote a letter to the chief captain of the army, and directed him to have Uriah exposed in the foremost rank, in the thickest and most furious shock of the battle, and there

abandoned to certain death. He then gave this letter—what I am telling you is strictly true—he then gave this letter to Uriah himself, that he, of all other men, should be the person to carry and deliver it: but mark, he gave it him well folded and sealed; nor did it ever occur to him, should the poor wretch get the slightest insight into its contents, or even suspect their nature, that he would still proceed, and faithfully deliver it. CHRIST did not act thus towards His disciples. His letter He gave them open. He plainly told them in His Gospel, that He sent them to meet an infinity of wrongs, indignities, and cruelties. *Behold I send you forth as lambs in the midst of wolves* (S. Matt. x. 16); and in another place, *They shall lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up into synagogues and prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake* (S. Luke xxi. 12); and in another place, *The hour cometh, when he that killeth you shall think that he doeth God service* (S. John xvi. 2); and in another place, *They will deliver you up to the councils and they will scourge you* (S. Matt. x. 17); and in another place, *They shall deliver you up to be afflicted and shall kill you* (S. Matt. xxiv. 9); and in another place, *And ye shall be betrayed both by parents and brethren and kinsfolk and friends, and some of you shall they cause to be put to death* (S. Luke xxi. 16). Notwithstanding this, what numbers of them went forth and faithfully delivered this letter! They delivered it to the Presidents; they delivered it to the Proconsuls; they delivered it to the Kings themselves on their thrones: no fears deterred them from presenting that Gospel in the quarters, where they knew such cruel sufferings must await them; yea, to the very persons, who were to inflict those sufferings with the utmost atrocity. And was not there in this something most astonishing? Oh, what constancy! Oh, what courage! Oh, what fidelity! And could all this be ever done for the sake of a man, who was a sinner? I am quite aware, that even among the Mahometans, the heathen, and the heretics, some such voluntary martyr has been found, who would sooner die than betray his fidelity to his crazy-headed legislator. But, in the first place, the death these persons had to endure was nothing uncommon, and their pains did not last long. Not a case

can be produced among them of a martyr patiently suffering for fourteen years, as did S. Gregory of Armenia; or twenty-eight years, as did S. Clement of Ancyra. And, if called at any time to endure a lingering death, they submitted with grief and reluctance, and not, as every one of the Christians did, with a contented happy smile; so that, impossible as it may appear to Cicero in his philosophy for any one, however wise, to rejoice in his being enclosed in the burning bull of the celebrated Perillus, that engineer of hell; yet we have actually seen this exemplified in an Antipas a Bishop, in a Pelagia a virgin, in a Eustachius and in all his family, who being thrust into the red-hot fiery ox bellowed, as it were, from its mouth in accents of joy and in songs of victory. Not to mention another fact, that, even granting some of them to have died with great fortitude, we find this to have invariably happened in the case of persons of a strong bodily constitution, or of a determined self-will, or of a frame inured to hardships. Never did it happen in the instance of weak declining old age, nor of the frail tender sex, nor of susceptible early youth, nor of easily frightened childhood, nor even of sweet gentle infancy, as it happened among ourselves. And what a glorious godly spectacle it was to behold a Bishop, Simeon, at the age of a hundred and twenty years, singing songs on his cross, like a most melodious swan! to behold two little boys, Justus and Pastor, making a jubilee between every stroke of the lash! to behold two dear children, Mammes and Vito, rejoicing on the scaffold! To hear Eulalia, an illustrious virgin, of thirteen years old, who completely covered with wounds loudly invoked the tyrant to order that plenty of salt should be immediately sprinkled over her, so as to render her a more grateful morsel to the palate of her Beloved. Other martyrs, it is true, endured their tortures; but never did they go forth to greet them. Never would they have acted, like that Julian, who fearing, in consequence of his lameness, that he would not reach the slaughter-house in time to join his fellow-martyrs, got himself carried there without delay in the sturdy arms of some slaves; nor like that Apollonia, who cast herself into the flames; nor like that Agapetus, who threw himself among the wild beasts; nor like

that Antonius, who dressed all in white went to his martyrdom, as to a nuptial Festival. And, even if their martyrs did voluntarily offer themselves to their murderers, it so turned out, that they had afterwards no means to retreat and to effect their deliverance. It may be, they went to their martyrdom out of love; but it was sheer compulsion, that kept them to it. Not so with the Christians. Incessantly were they implored by their enemies to have some pity on themselves. They were courted with smiles, enticed with promises, besieged with liberal offers in the shape of money, jewels, fortunes, honours, dignities; but all so ineffectually, that a Bishop, no less famous than Cyprian, when his head was just on the block, declared the very executioner, who was on the point of beheading him, to be heir to his whole property. And, after all, supposing no other difference between the two cases, yet their martyrs were so few in number, that we can name them in a breath, or gather them in a handful: whereas ours can scarcely be counted, Genebrand reckoning them at full eleven millions; those, I mean, that were the most primitive, the most unquestioned, and the most renowned.

8. I am well aware how shrewdly it may here be objected in reply, that the fact of having raised up such a host of martyrs proves the existence at the same time of numerous persecutors; and that a question may therefore arise, as to which party, in the cause of CHRIST, we should lend our confidence to—whether to the person, who stood up in His defence; or, to the person, who persecuted Him, as His enemy. But observe in how many ways I can overrule this objection. It is quite true that CHRIST met with many persecutors. But, in the first place, we do not know, who were the most numerous, they, or His martyrs; while of this we are certain, that a single persecutor was quite enough to kill many martyrs, but no single martyr could require many persecutors. Moreover, must not more weight unquestionably be attached to the evidence of the man, who died for CHRIST, than to the evidence of the man, who opposed Him? Some obliquity of mind, some heat of the blood, some incentive of envy, some impulse of anger will suffice to make a persecutor; but to give one's life for the sake of another, to give it, I say, in the

prospect of such atrocious tortures and with such a calm complete self-possession, this sacrifice demands a very high esteem for the person, in whose behalf we make it. What constancy, what courage, what fidelity are here required! Can there then be any doubt, but that the evidence of a single martyr must outweigh, in the cause of CHRIST, that of a hundred persecutors?

Consider, in addition to this, how widely the persecutors differed in their characters from the martyrs. The bulk of the latter consisted of men, who had conducted themselves well from their youth, having been either dragged from their cloisters, or from their hermitages, or from their academies, or from their Churches; men of wisdom, of integrity, of modest, retiring, mortified dispositions, in whom their very enemies could find nothing criminal, excepting their faith in CHRIST; as Pliny, one of those enemies, bare witness in his Epistle to Trajan, that is, to an Emperor, who would be more pleased, he well knew, in hearing the Christians accused, than commended. Whereas, on the other hand, what sort of people were the persecutors? What were the majority of them but ignorant, low-minded, overbearing men, trained in the brothels, educated in the theatres, and frequently taken from the roll of the gladiators? Do you then tell me, Christians were persecuted? Nothing certainly is more true. But by whom were they persecuted? By a Nero, an abortion of man's nature; by a Domitian, killed by his own people for being a monster of cruelty; by a Gallien, abhorred by his biographers, as a prodigy of shame; by a Galerian, who afterwards became so sad an object of detestation and disgust not only to his enemies, nor even to his subjects, nor yet to his domestics, but to himself, that with his own hand he committed suicide; by a Trajan, so great a beast, that I cannot inform you without blushing of his excessive depravity; by a Decius, by a Diocletian, by a Maxentius, by a Licinius, by a Maximinus, all of them men born, it would seem, only to degrade the race of mankind. Can any person therefore be so utterly demented, as to consider CHRIST the greatest sinner in the world, because He was persecuted by such reprobates, as these? We shall

rather be disposed, when we consider the matter, to draw hence the most convincing proof of His great holiness; since nothing more indubitably shows the surpassing brilliancy of the sun, than the extreme aversion, which all the ugly birds of the night entertain towards it.

9. Did then these and like persecutors ultimately prevail against CHRIST? When other religions had to contend with powerful oppressors, we all know they soon yielded; at one time cowed by authority, at another vanquished by force. But where was it that our religion ever took deeper root, than among its enemies? If ever a city was most bitterly intent on persecuting the name of Christian, that city was Rome. She was not satisfied with covering the arenas of her theatres and filling the jaws of her wild beasts with our blood. In her thirst for our complete annihilation, she despatched beyond her own borders, as far as Africa and even Asia, rabid Proconsuls to track us out to our places of concealment, to condemn us, when accused, to butcher us, when we stood firm. But what has she done by all this? She has brought herself to resign her empire to the very cause she so persecuted. To us she has transferred her palaces, to us her temples, to us her Universal Supremacy; and she, who used to be the most savage persecutress, that Christianity ever had, afterwards became its most gentle and affectionate nurse. And how then is it, that a man, spoken of, as being so transcendently wicked, could ever effect such mighty things? Has He forsooth gained His triumphs by force of arms, by a deluge of armies, by a whirlwind of terrors? Oh, just so! For this gigantic acquisition He has procured no more, than the assistance of twelve fishermen to preach for Him—poor, illiterate, mendicant, despised men; and, what is still worse, Jews—men, belonging to a nation then held in contempt and abhorrence; and with these men He has seized upon Rome; with these men He has subdued His enemies; with these men He has vanquished barbarians; with these men He has brought the pride of philosophers under His dominion. The Roman Senate admitted Alexander the Great among its deities, because it looked upon the man, who could overcome the whole world in the short space of twelve years, as being

no ordinary person. Alexander however accomplished this, whilst he was yet alive, and in the possession of vast resources, and the Ruler of many people; whereas CHRIST subjugated the world unto Himself, after He was crucified. He did it without the help of money, without the clash of arms; "Not with iron, but with wood" (S. Augustine). And shall any, after this, not only refuse to adore Him, as a man, who was Divine, but condemn Him, as a man, who was the worst of his species?

10. I know that, in the prosecution of His vast undertaking, He employed that superhuman power, which passes among us under the name of miraculous. But can that man be the worst of all men in the world, at whose Name the elements bow down in awe, and all nature quakes in fear? Who counselled thee, O thou chief among the planets, to clothe thyself in dark apparel, and to mourn at the death of a crucified man, for whose punishment, had He been only a counterfeit god, thou oughtest rather to have shined forth with delight, than veiled thyself in dismay? O ye rocks, what induced you to burst asunder? ye graves, to open your jaws? ye precipices, to rush into the bowels of the earth on so happy an occasion? Was this then the special gratitude you evinced to your Maker, thus to express your strong indignation at the death of one, who, worse than Lucifer himself, not only aspired to be an assessor with GOD on His Throne, but to reign on that throne Supreme?

But, should any one be mad enough here to pretend, that CHRIST suffered on the Cross the punishment due to such audacity on His part, how then do you account for this, that so many dumb, at the simple invocation of His Name, should have learned to speak? so many lame to walk? so many deaf to hear? so many blind to recover their perfect sight? and even so many dead to return to life? *How can a man, that is a sinner, do such miracles?* (S. John ix. 16.) I will go further. Mention to the evil spirits any other name you please. Mention Mahomet, mention Ali, mention Amida,[1]

[1] After many vain endeavours to find out, who this *Amida* was, the translator unexpectedly lighted upon this mention of him in Bishop Atterbury's Sermon on Acts xxvi. 26.

"The several idolatrous religions in the East and West Indies are said to

mention the still expected MESSIAH of the Jews; and just see, whether they won't laugh at you for your pains. Mention JESUS, and behold, whether they do not dread Him and tremble at His Name. JESUS! JESUS! This, after all, is the only Name, that has confounded them, that has paralyzed them, that has thrown them all into a collapse. And Oh, the good reason we have to speak of that Name, as being *poured out* upon us all? *Thy Name is as oil poured forth.* (Cant. i. 2, Vulg.) To ourselves it has proved a healing oil, which has restored immediate health to thousands and thousands; but to the devils it has proved an oil, scalding them to death. I remember to have read, in the fatal war of Palestine, that the people of Cirsa, on their seeing the Romans already scaling triumphantly their city walls, when unable by any other means to stop or repel them, emptied upon their backs, as they advanced, buckets full of burning oil. This penetrating through their armour reached their skin, and so passed to their inward vitals, till it brought them down headlong into the trench below, foaming with indignation. Oh, how striking is the comparison! The evil spirits had spread their hitherto victorious banners over all the world; they had taken possession of every quarter; they had made themselves masters of every position; when this oil, (Oh, its tremendous heat!) this *oil* of *the Name of Jesus* was *poured forth* upon them, the agonizing torture whereof sunk them all into that profound abyss, from whence in their daring insolence they came to the attack. *When they were lifted up, Thou hast cast them down.* (Ps. lxxiii. 18, Vulg.) Accordingly, my hearers, no sooner was the Name of JESUS magnified in the world, than all the oracles of Lesbos, of Delphi, of Delos, of Ephesus,

have received their sanction from miracles done by the first authors and founders of them; but then the reporters of these facts are so much later than the facts themselves, that it is impossible to have any rational assurance concerning the reality of them—(their Mango-Copal, *Amida*, Brama, and Zaca are supposed to have achieved wonders)—at a time, when there was no way of transmitting accounts of them to posterity but by memory alone, and some thousands of years before there could be any written monuments of them. Now this, I say, is to build the proof of Divine truths upon the certainty of some accounts, whereof men can never be certain: it is to establish the belief of a revelation upon things done, or said to be done, 'in a corner,' and which require a new revelation to make them credible."

of Dodona, of Daphne were struck dumb; all the powers of darkness were rendered effete and breathless; they so utterly lost, we may say, the very power of speech, that that sinner of a Porphyry stung with rage was compelled to acknowledge; "Since JESUS has been worshipped, our gods have done nothing for us."

What impression, my hearers, does all this make upon you? Such mighty, such palpable, such evident, such gigantic effects, as these are—is it possible they could ever be produced by invocating the name of the greatest sinner among men? Who can be so foolish, as by entertaining such a notion to do violence to all plain common sense, not to speak of higher and heavenly considerations? But if so, then let us conclude, beyond doubt, that CHRIST is GOD: for, as we proved before, there is no middle point in this case. His wickedness must either be supreme, or His Divinity must be, above all things, sure. And then, if He is GOD, it is enough. I need be at no trouble to prove the truth of the doctrines He has commanded us to believe, the Creed, the Sacraments, and other like tenets.[1] However we may grant these to be difficult to our low understanding, to be abstruse, to be above us, what does it matter? We are preserved from all possibility of falling into error in a case, where, supposing error to exist, it must have been GOD Himself, who caused us to err.

THE SECOND PART.

11. Oh yes!—You have not a little murmured against me this morning within yourselves, blaming me for one or other of these two things; either that I have preached a sermon, utterly useless before such an audience; or, that of such an audience I have betrayed a very bad opinion. And was this then a sermon to be preached in Pisa, a city, so profoundly attached to the Name of CHRIST? Ought it not rather to

[1] "Reason is able to judge, and must, of the evidence of Revelation, and of the objections urged against that evidence .... Though objections against the evidence of Christianity are most seriously to be considered, yet, objections against Christianity itself are in a great measure frivolous; almost all objections against it, excepting those, which are alleged against the particular proofs of its coming from GOD."—*Bp. Butler*, Analogy, P. ii. ch. 3.

have been reserved, till some contrary winds had driven me to the shores of Tunis or the coasts of Algiers? Excuse me, gentle Sirs, in your reflecting upon me thus: for I thought that, by the apology, with which I prefaced my sermon, I had sufficiently obviated all such complaints. But, as you now oblige me to speak freely, I beseech you, at least, not to take offence at what I say. Perhaps I have erred in addressing you, as I have done; because, as you rank among the most ancient Christians in the land, so, it may be, you ought to be among the most irreproachable. Still, I cannot but think that, as a general rule, no topic ought to be more frequently and universally insisted upon among Christians, than the duty of their holding fast the truth of the Religion they profess.

For how is it ever possible for them, believing it to be thus true, to act like persons, who believe it to be an imposture? To act like them, did I say? Worse, worse, far worse, I ought to have said; so long as a sin is habitual among Christians, which is not even known to unbelievers. Show me a heathen, belonging to any one of their odious sects, who in his own land and among his own people is ashamed of avowing it. The Turk is not ashamed to go about, as a Turk; nor the Jew to behave, as a Jew; nor a Gentile to live after the manner of Gentiles. It is the Christian only, I find, who is ashamed to act in his character, as a Christian. Mark the truth of what I say. There is one of your own nobles, determined to have his revenge for some affront, that has been offered him. Accordingly, he arms a band of hired ruffians, and with these he lays an ambush against his enemy, now in the city, now in the fields, and pursues him to the very death. Very well. Now suppose you were employed to deter this man from his purpose; what arguments would you use, as most likely to prevail with him? Would you perhaps say; "My dear Lord, remember that you are a Christian. Disarm, disarm these men; because it is not lawful for you to take revenge?" Why, any of you, using language like this, would be set down, as a fool; and, at all events, the nobleman himself would laugh at you, expecting you to display less zeal, and more common sense. Whereas, if you were to submit to him, that by thus taking his revenge, he would be

acting beneath his position in society; or, still more, were you to tell him, that his Sovereign had prohibited such acts of revenge; or, that it was the special wish of his lady that he should proceed no further in the business, he would not feel ashamed to give you a hearing. And if, at last, he should yield to your representations and be led to accept a reconciliation, do you believe, that he would then have sufficient courage to go and declare to this effect; "I forgive my enemy the wrong he has done me, because the Religion I profess lays this obligation upon me. I am a Christian. I am not ashamed of the Gospel of CHRIST." Why, in a nobleman of his stamp this would be regarded, as something ludicrous and beneath him; which it would by no means appear, had he given out, that he had granted the pardon to please his lady, or to show submission to his Sovereign. And do you then really regard our religion, as being the true one? You cannot, Sirs, you cannot. For how is it possible for you not simply to omit doing what it requires, which may be imputed to your weakness, but that you should consider it something derogatory, or, I may rather say, something downright disgraceful in you, to obey its precepts?

Or, again, how would it be possible for you not to permit the people freely and independently to practise it? Would you assert, that the truth of our religion was allowed by those Presidents, or those Pro-consuls, or those tyrants, who in former times forbade the Christians' openly declaring themselves to be such, who compelled them, when they wished to celebrate their most Holy mysteries, to seek concealment either in the catacombs, or in the cemeteries? I don't think you would. Tell me then, do you never compel any of your own people to go in search, if not of the most secret catacombs, yet of the most lonely churches; and, if not of the most obscure cemeteries, yet of the most out-of-the-way chapels, to escape your ridicule, whensoever they may have a wish, under a deeper sense of devotion, to unite in the sacred services, or to refresh themselves with the Bread of Heaven? And what jesting do you make of that young woman, who prefers a more simple and rather antiquated style of dress! and of that young man, who takes delight in the conversation

of the most devoted to religion! And is not this by overt acts to oppose the practice of our faith, even as the tyrannous unbelievers of old once did? This difference only I can discover between them and you; they opposed it with the sword, you oppose it with ridicule: and ridicule will often cut sharper than the sword; insomuch that a person has been known to succumb under the sportive banter of people about him, whom no poisoned daggers of the barbarians could ever have deterred from acting publicly in the most Christian manner.

Hear however something still worse. Sins the most abandoned, sensual indulgences the most brutish, plainly forbidden, as they are, in that Law, which you hold to be true, these are often turned by you into subjects of boasting, as acts of prowess, things to make you happy, things you may be proud of; and, when you hear of them in others, you encourage them by the award of your approval and satisfaction, you embellish your literature with them; you admit them into your academies; you rapturously applaud them in your theatres. And is this faith? Is this, Sirs, your faith? A sin committed does not, I know, eradicate the principle of faith from our minds; but to encourage sin and to applaud sin—Alas! this clearly evinces an incipient stage towards unbelief. For what else, speaking correctly, is unbelief, than to entertain opinions, contrary to the instructions CHRIST has given us? to commend what He blames? to blame what He commends? I had then but too much reason on my side, when I expressed a belief, that no one thing among Christians is so necessary at the present time, as to set CHRIST before them, impressing their minds with a firm belief of His being the true GOD; for, beyond all doubt, they will by this means be led to pay Him greater veneration; nor will people then consider that disgraceful, which He regards as honourable, nor regard that as honourable, which He considers disgraceful.

This very morning therefore form this most indispensable rule of life—(do so, I beseech you, for that faith's sake, which you profess)—never for the future to let any words pass your lips, which may redound to the approval of vice, or to the discouragement of virtue. Do not shrink from any oppor-

tunities offered you of frankly avowing yourselves to be Christian men; of patiently enduring ill-treatment, as Christians; of conducting yourselves at church, as Christians; of promoting peace, quietness, and charity, our leading characteristics, as Christians; of never sucking the blood of minors[1]—in ways, too, the most cruel and most inhuman—or the blood of the poor, which is the Blood of Christ. And, when you have done all this, that I advise you, then you are quite welcome to complain of your preacher for such a sermon, as he ought rather to have reserved for the people at Tunis or at Algiers.

[1] This particular sin, singled out here and so emphatically denounced, was probably common at the time of Segneri, and scarcely regarded, as a sin.

SERMON XXI.

ON THE MINOR INCIDENTS OF LIFE, AS CONNECTED WITH OUR SALVATION.

S. John iv. 6, 7.

"Jesus therefore being wearied with His journey sat thus on the well. And it was about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water."

1. What happened to the Samaritan woman this day, well known, as I suppose it is to you all, excites in my mind two opposite feelings—fervent hope, and chilling fear. For, when I seriously reflect on how small a matter the salvation of so great a sinner depended, a bold thought starts up within me, that, in this case, it does not require much to be saved. But alas! as quickly, on the other hand, does a trembling thought suggest, that, if so, then also it does not require much to be damned. True it is, that this miserable woman became holy for no other reason, than because she came, as it were, by an accident, to the well, just at the moment, when Christ wearied and exhausted was seated there; and because, on His asking her a question, she cheerfully refrained from drawing the water she was in quest of, that she might hear the admirable wise counsels He had to give her. But suppose, that, after her first seeing Him, she had refused to attend to what He said, and had replied; "I have other matters now to think of. I am thirsty, very thirsty: and then, it is too late in the day; *It is the sixth hour:* it is high time for me to return home to my family affairs." How extremely probable it is, that no such favourable opportunity would ever afterwards

have presented itself to her, as the means of leading her to self-examination and repentance. It is then with no small misgiving, that I take occasion from this incident to inquire of you, my dear Sirs, what importance you attach to those gentle inward motions, which from time to time invite you to some exercise of self-denial? In what light do you view the first calls and stirrings in your heart towards virtue, or the least trivial act of obedience? That least trivial act of obedience was, notwithstanding, the point, from which our Blessedness was to take its beginning; and just as, if we neglect the beginning, we cannot reach the end, so, if we neglect that trivial circumstance, we cannot reach Paradise. "Oh, father," you will exclaim; "how is this possible? Do you wish then that a man's everlasting salvation should hang on a trifle? In using such language, you would fain terrify, rather than instruct us."—I would fain terrify you? Ah, yes! I confess it. My object is to terrify you. But why so? Because I am terrified myself. With the holy father S. Augustine I can say trembling: "Terrified myself, I terrify others." Not however that I would alarm you with exaggerated fears; let it rather be, with solid substantial verities. I promise to advance nothing, but what makes me shudder from head to foot, whensoever I think of it, and which, if insufficient to subdue in me the power of sin, yet, at all events, does not render me more incapable of being corrected. And what is this? Why, the identical truth, that just seemed to you so extravagant; namely, that a man's everlasting salvation hangs on a trifle. This it is, that makes me tremble; and this is the proposition I now undertake to prove, that every one of you may clearly perceive, how the favourable opportunity, as it consists of small things, must be taken in time by the forelock.

2. In the first place, you cannot be surprised to hear that from small things results of the utmost magnitude derive their origin. Naturalists in their surveys, politicians in their essays, and moralists in their maxims are continually sounding this in our ears. A glance round the world will indeed suffice in a moment to make it plain to us. That little seed is not the only one in Palestine, which boasts of its mounting

so high, as not only to over-top the corn, but to reach the height of the lofty trees. If we wished accurately to ascertain the origin of all those vast forests, which supply the many spears to our soldiers, the many ships to our seas, the many supports to our houses, the many materials to our machinery, the many retreats to the wild beasts, and the abundant fuel to the flames, should we not trace it to a few very diminutive seeds, such as the birds play with, such as we tread under our feet? Forsooth, it ill becomes the thunderbolt, as it bursts over our heads, to make all this tremendous clatter, that it may show off its surprising power. Let it overthrow the battlements, let it smite the mountain tops, let it reduce the forests to ashes, let it strike terror into the hearts of men; still, we all pretty well know from what a thin airy vapour it derived its birth. And those mighty rivers, which in their lordly progress through the earth assign limits to provinces, and seem to dispute the empire with the ocean—and hence, in this character, sometimes bear on their backs vessels equipped for war, or feed from their bosoms immense fisheries, while, at another time, rushing furiously from their barriers they annihilate the cattle, deluge the country, prostrate the harvest, lay siege to private dwellings, and make whole cities desolate—these same mighty rivers, could we only discover their sources, what cause would they not have to feel humbled on seeing, either some common peasants frisking in them for a sport, or some tired travellers jumping over them for an insult! So commonly do things of the utmost magnitude take their rise from the very least. The conflagrations, kindled by a spark, the pestilences, diffused by a breath, the earthquakes, caused by a current of air, are hence become of such universal celebrity.

But, still more, considering the course of events in the moral world, who can be ignorant of the fact, that a cause, most trivial in itself, may sink a person from a state of honour into one of degradation, or may raise him from degradation to a state of honour? Abigail from being a common subject was promoted to be David's wife; and thereby she came to encircle her brows with a Royal diadem. But how did this come to pass? From a certain kind act of civility, shown by

her towards David's soldiers in bringing them some refreshment (1 Sam. xxv.) Rebekah from a simple country damsel was raised to be Isaac's spouse; and thereby she came in due time to be the progenitor of the promised Messiah. But how did this come to pass? From a similar kind act of hospitality, shown by her to Isaac's messenger in offering him some water. Whereas, in regard to Haman, that most renowned favourite of King Ahasuerus, how came it to pass, that he sunk in disgrace, that he lost his proud honours, his wealth, his family, and was himself suspended on the public gallows, as a malefactor? It arose from no other cause, than his having felt piqued by one Mordecai, a poor inconsiderable plebeian, who refused to pay him the reverence he expected. *He saw that Mordecai bowed not* (Esther iii. 5). Why should I refer you to the profession of arms, to the mercantile world, to the fine arts and sciences? Was it not owing to the merest accident in the world, that Protagoras rose to be so admired in Greece for his philosophy? This Protagoras was nothing more, than an obscure peasant boy, when, as he was one day carrying on his slender shoulders a bundle of faggots to his aged father, he chanced to fall in with that famous sage Democritus, who, observing with what singular neatness the pieces of wood were tied together, asked him, whether this was his own handy work. On whose answer in the affirmative, "Just undo them," he said, "and then try to put them together in the same way." Protagoras instantly obeyed, and, tying them together with his former skill and cleverness, replaced them on his shoulders. Democritus, observing this, concluded that the boy had a good natural capacity for learning, and therefore invited him to come and settle in his school. He educated him; he maintained him; he initiated him; and hence Protagoras became a philosopher, not inferior to so worthy a master. Now suppose Protagoras had never arranged those faggots with such neatness, or that he had not fallen in with Democritus at such a conjuncture, how very likely it is, that he would have been left, all his life, to drive the plough, instead of guiding the pen, and to draw furrows in the fields, instead of lines on paper! And I could produce numberless instances to the same purpose from different walks in life,

were I not desirous to hasten to the examples we find in the works of Grace, without dwelling so long on those derived from nature.

3. You admit, that, conformably with the plan, observed by GOD in the order of nature, He proceeds also to act in the order of Grace. Otherwise than by what we see we are unable to elevate our minds to the understanding of what we see not; as S. Paul maintained in his Epistle to the Romans; *The invisible things of Him are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made* (i. 20). Now GOD, of His own prevenient will—not only of His revealed will[1]—as theologians express it, but even of His secret will—has destined the glory of Paradise to all men; and He has therefore sincerely willed, that all should obtain it, that not one should come short of it; *God willeth all men to be saved* (1 Tim. ii. 4). But, the end being the same, at which all must arrive, it does not follow that all the ways, whereby to reach that end, are the same too. On the contrary, in the life of each individual, as the Schools teach us, GOD rather foresees numberless connections and concatenations, or successive occurrences, which, like so many high roads, conduct, some of them directly to glory, others directly to perdition—*the way of Life and the way of death* (Jer. xxi. 8). Now, whether a person set out by one of these ways, rather than by the other, will depend sometimes

[1] The distinction here meant, as laid down in the Schools, is thus stated by Bishop Andrewes. "GOD'S will is either hidden and secret, or revealed and open. The one is that which the Prophet calls 'the counsel or thought of His heart' (Ps. xxxii. 11); the other is that will of His Word, wherein He declareth and openeth to man, what His will is. His secret will is *voluntas beneplaciti*, 'the good pleasure of His will;' His revealed will is *voluntas signi*, which is disclosed to us. His revealed will is *voluntas, quam Ipse nos velle vult:* that will which He willeth us to will. The secret will of His heart is *voluntas adoranda, non scrutanda;* but the open and revealed will of GOD is *voluntas scrutanda, et facienda*, both to be searched out and done by us." (Sermons on the LORD'S Prayer, 2.) This explains the language of Segneri in the original, *Sua volontà antecedente non pur di segno, ma ancora di beneplacito.* This distinction may have led to the important and most judicious appendix to Art. xvii. "of Predestination and Election." "Furthermore, we must receive GOD'S promises in such wise, as they be generally set forth in Holy Scripture; and in our doings, that *Will of God* is to be followed, which we have *expressly declared unto us* in the Word of GOD." See, on this particular doctrine, the profound *Dr. Jackson;* "A Treatise of the Divine Essence and Attributes." B. xi. ch. xli. s. 4—15.

on the most trivial circumstances. The fact of his hearing or not hearing some sermon, of his reading or not reading some book, of his conversing or not conversing with some person, of his attending or not attending some society, may be the very turning point to put us in the road to Heaven, or in the road to hell.[1] I said, you observe, put us in the road; because our salvation will not depend upon these actions of ours immediately, but it will depend upon them remotely; just in the same manner, as we have remarked already, that the most trifling actions have a natural tendency to lead the worldly man to severe losses or to immense gains; so that, *though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase* (Job viii. 7).

Let none of you be discouraged by the idea that he has not yet quite mastered this doctrine; for by the aid of examples I will make it plain and intelligible, even to those among you, who have no skill in Scholastic divinity. Let us then with this view adduce that noble history, related to us by the holy father, S. Augustine (Confessions, Lib. viii. c. 6). He informs us that, when the Emperor Theodosius was staying in the city of Treviri to see the celebrated games of the Circus, two of his courtiers wished to absent themselves from the spectacle; but not knowing how in the mean time to employ their leisure they strayed together beyond the city walls to enjoy a quiet view of the country. They struck from one

[1] The power, which a few words possess, when directed by the Spirit of GOD, in determining for good the future life and even everlasting destiny of the hearer, has received lately among ourselves a most interesting illustration in the case of the late excellent Bishop of Calcutta. The Rev. John Hambleton observes in the sermon preached on occasion of his death: "The instrumental means of his being truly converted to GOD was a word of remonstrance, addressed to him by a youth in the warehouse, who expressed his surprise that he, brought up, as he had been, should evince such levity of mind; who also reminded him that religion was a concern of the heart, and urged him to pray for the right feelings." This happened on the 9th of March 1796, when the Bishop was in his eighteenth year, and it was ever afterwards gratefully remembered and mentioned by him, as being the particular incident, which first led his wandering feet into the way of Life. It is encouraging to the translator, in the prosecution of this work, to know on very high authority, that, had the late Bishop understood Italian, "Segneri would have been his delight." (See his Funeral Sermon, preached by the Right Rev. the Lord Bishop of Winchester.)

path into another, talking on different subjects, until they came upon a lonely forest, where certain secluded penitents dwelt in a rude wretched hovel. Into this hovel they entered, just by way of seeing it; and, while they were wondering, as might be expected, at the straitness of the dwelling and the poorness of the furniture, they saw a book very much worn lying on a small table. One of them takes it up, and finds it to contain a history of the acts of the great S. Anthony. He first out of curiosity begins to read a few lines, then for the sake of the pleasure it afforded him; till he feels something like a desire gently kindling within him to go and do likewise. At length, his heart suddenly taking fire under the impulse of a Divine love, and his countenance in deep blushes expressing what he felt, he utters a profound sigh, and says to his companion, "What wretches we are to be pursuing such a different way! Tell me, I beseech thee, to what we are aspiring in all this toil and travail we are undergoing? What are we in search of? Oh, tell me, Sir, by all that is dear to thee, what is our object in our long wearisome attendances and humiliating services at the Court? What are we bent upon? Can we ever possibly hope for any thing beyond our Prince's favour? Is not that the utmost limit of our most sanguine expectation—to be taken notice of, as the Emperor's friends? But who will guarantee our succeeding in this? Life is short; youth is deceitful; strength is precarious; the candidates are many; the prizes are few. And even, should we gain our point, what is there at Court, but uncertainty and peril? What, after all, shall we have secured? Nothing but the bare exchange of one kind of toil for another, slavery for slavery. Oh, the envy, which will besiege us! the hatred, the calumny, the persecution! Should we not have to spend our days in constant fear, and to be always upon the watch? On the contrary, in order to become the friends of God, we need only a willing mind: nothing beyond this is required; and then His friendship—none can ever dispute it with us: none can ever take it away. Now, even this very moment, if I only wish it, I am the friend of God!" He then once more cast his eyes upon the book, and overcome by the prospect of the momentous change, that agitated his mind, he

both read and groaned at the same time; his countenance turning pale and then inflamed, now lost in thought, now bathed in tears. At last, he abruptly closes the book, and striking the table with his hand resolutely addresses his companion; "For my part I have thoroughly made up my mind never to leave this place. I wish from this very hour, and here on this very spot, to consecrate myself entirely to GOD. Therefore, if you have no wish to follow me, don't hinder me." "What," replied the other, deeply affected by such an example, "GOD forbid, that I should keep this earth for my portion, and let you have Heaven! Either let us both return to the Court; or, let this hovel be our home." And so, having resolved not even to see the Emperor again, they informed him of their mutual determination in writing, and then, divesting themselves immediately of their magnificent Court dresses, they put on sackcloth, girded their loins with the cord, and shut themselves up in a cell, where in the utmost mortification and austerity they passed the remainder of their lives, never more highly reputed in the world, than when they first began to despise it.

Tell me now, Sirs, to what beginning are we to trace back all the blessed performances and good effects of their repentance? What was their first entrance upon the good way? Observe well, what it was,—their leaving the Circus. Upon this, GOD so ordered it, that they should take a walk; that taking this walk they should come upon this hermitage; that entering this hermitage they should read the book; that they should be touched in so doing with a strong impulse of devotion; that hence they should conceive a dislike to the Court, that they should renounce their homes, that they should adopt the cloister, that they should proceed along the Royal road of the Cross. Whereas, suppose them to have still remained at the Circus, which they might have done without any violent remonstrances of conscience, would any of these incidents have befallen them? It is morally certain they would not; because, if we are to believe the Preacher, all things have their own proper time and season; *To every purpose there is time and judgment.* (Eccl. viii. 6.) A very different series of events would then have been the result, and GOD

only knows whither it would have carried them; for, in all probability, they would have continued in the service of their Prince, in the follies of the Court, in the vices of the age, and —certain consequence—in the risk also of damnation. We must therefore ascribe their salvation (not indeed in regard to its proximate, but its more remote cause) to the fact of their having withdrawn themselves from a rather questionable amusement. This was seemingly that tiny fountain, seen by Mardocheus afterwards to change into so mighty a river. (Esther xi. 10.) This was like unto that small stone, seen by Daniel to become afterwards such an immense mountain. (ii. 35.)

4. And now conceive, that from causes, just as trivial as these, all those Saints had their beginning, who are now reputed among us for having made the highest attainments in sanctity and perfection. Certainly, they, who were born into the world Saints, are very few in number: in the Old Testament a Jeremiah; in the New, a John. As to the rest, the majority were not born, but made Saints: and what was the cause of this transformation? It happened to one, because he cast away his lute and guitar, to run after a holy man, who attended with a concourse of people was passing along the public road; this was the case with Ranieri of Pisa. It happened to another, because he fixed his eyes intently upon a dead body; this was the case with Francis Borgia. To another it happened, because he had kindly overlooked an injury, as was the case with John Gualberto; to another, because he had kindly relieved a poor beggar, as was the case with holy Francis of Assisi; to another, because he had, though innocent, submitted to be put in prison, as was the case with Ephraim the Syrian; to another, because he came in by accident for a particular sermon, as was the case with Nicholas of Tolentino. The famous Anthony, when but a young man, entered a Church to attend the Service, and happened to hear that Gospel, in which it is written, *If thou wouldst be perfect, sell that that thou hast, and follow Me.* He took the words, as addressed to himself, and from that time resolved on a life after the example of CHRIST. The great Ignatius Loyola recovering from sickness asked for any book

to beguile away the time with; and, instead of a military work on cavalry, such as he would have preferred, the legends of the Saints was brought him. He begins reading it, and thereupon determines upon a life like theirs. Now, if Anthony had not attentively joined in the Service, or, if Ignatius had not read that book, what, suppose ye, would have befallen them? Would they then have become those eminent Saints, whom we now so highly venerate? I cannot answer for this; because it entirely depends upon the hidden counsels of GOD, those *waters of the deep torrent, which could not be passed over,* mentioned by Ezekiel. (lxxvii. 5, Vulg.) Still, the greater probability might be, that such would not have been the result; for GOD is often wont to deal with men, as He did with Naaman the Syrian, that leper—whether most in his body or in his soul, I cannot tell—whose entire happiness, you all know, GOD suspended upon a certain act, an act in the highest degree insignificant, his bathing seven times in a small stream, in a strange land. *Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thou shalt be clean.* (2 Kings v. 10.) But who would have believed it? "What!" exclaimed Naaman, "How is it, that the man did not rather *come out to me, and stand, and strike his hand over the place?*"—No; GOD requires thee to *wash*—But, if I must wash, why not rather in the waters, the famous waters of my own Damascus? No; it must be in *Jordan*—But would not Pharpar be better? No; it must be in *Jordan*—But would not Abana be better? No; it must be in *Jordan.* Dost thou wish then to prescribe laws to GOD? *Who will say unto Him, What doest Thou?* (Job ix. 12.) Be it then, as it pleases thee; for thou art master of thine own will. Only rest assured of this, that all thy happiness, not only in body but also in soul, will have to depend upon thy mortifying this proud spirit of thine by performing an act, so little suited to the end, and so unbecoming thyself. *Go wash in Jordan seven times, and thou shalt be clean.*—Now GOD in this very same manner will often attach the sanctity and even the salvation of men to a like single good action of some common kind; on their performance of which, He proceeds to furnish them with a Grace so abundant, a protection so remarkable, just as we see in the case of Naaman, that for

a certainty they get to Heaven; but, on their non-performance of which, He deprives them of those more liberal assistances of His Grace, which, as is well known to Theologians, they cannot claim of Him, either by the law of Providence, or by the law of Redemption, and grants them nothing beyond His ordinary assistances. He suffers them to go on in their own way, to follow their foolish devices, and so they are lost; an event, which would have befallen Naaman himself, had he persisted in refusing to bathe in those waters, which he thought so far beneath his dignity.

5. And this is what holy men mean, when they say, that "Eternity hangs on a moment." Some indeed think that this moment is only that of our death, and hence they abuse all the other moments they have, as if to improve this one were quite enough. It is not so. To some, this moment comes in their childhood; to others, in youth; to others, at manhood; to others, in old age. And it is precisely that moment, when GOD, who is *most terrible in counsel among the children of men*, waits for us, as it were, at the pass or ferry, that He may test our sincerity and our willingness to co-operate with Him; the very design, unfolded by Moses to his people, when he said; *The Lord your God proveth you to know you, whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart.* (Deut. xiii. 3.) Not, however, because that moment once passed, salvation or damnation is not still equally within our reach: this cannot be affirmed; but because on that moment it will depend, whether for the future we shall incur greater or less difficulties in the path of obedience; whether we shall have more or less strength for the work; in a word, whether, to use S. Paul's expression, we shall find, or not find, *grace to help in the time of need.* (Heb. iv. 16.)

We will trace this, if you please, in a most remarkable example of Holy Scripture, one, that admirably confirms what I say, and, as coming to us under the highest authority, requires we should listen to it with no small dread and misgiving in our minds. The tribes of Israel having demanded of GOD a King, who, instead of the Judges, should reign over them, He at last, though very reluctantly, condescends to their importunity, and destines Saul to the office. This man

was of extremely low birth, but of great attainments in virtue; for the Sacred text declares that not one, out of the whole nation, was his superior for excellent conduct, *There was not a better man than he*[1] (1 Sam. ix. 2). And yet, to pass by his other cotemporaries, both a Samuel and a David were living at the same time, persons of high distinction. It was this Samuel, who was commissioned to elect Saul. He anointed him, he proclaimed him; and then, it being necessary for the new King at the commencement of his reign to offer sacrifices to God, Samuel calls him, and says, "Go down before me to Gilgal, and, when there, thou shalt tarry for me seven days, at the end of which I will offer the sacrifices. *Seven days shalt thou tarry, till I come to thee*" (1 Sam. x. 8). Saul goes to Gilgal, and waits for him; but the seventh day is well nigh over, and no Samuel appears. What ought Saul now to do? He beholds a most powerful army encamped just in front of him, challenging him to the fight: his own soldiers are all of them drawn out in battle array: the beasts the victims—he has them all quite ready. He determines, therefore, as the evening of the day appointed was now fast closing, to offer the sacrifice himself, as the Law allowed him to do in the absence of the Priest. Scarcely had he offered it, when Lo! Samuel appears. Saul advances to meet him, and Samuel no sooner beholds him, than he exclaims, "Ah, wretched man! Tell me, *what hast thou done?*" (1 Sam. xiii. 11.) Saul replies; "I waited for thee, according to the agreement, as long as I possibly could; but our soldiers in the meanwhile were clamorous for the battle; the enemy

[1] *Melior*, a *better* man; the rendering of the term in the edition of the Latin Vulgate, published in 1592 by Pope Clement VIII., which was a revision of the very incorrect edition of his predecessor Pope Sixtus V. in 1590. This possessed the authority of the Church, and was therefore used by Segneri. But it is worthy of remark, that the learned Bishop of Foligno, Isidorus Clarius, who had before corrected the Vulgate from the original Hebrew text, in his admirable Latin Version and Commentary (Venet. 1542), renders the word, not by *melior*, but by *pulchrior*, *fairer*, giving quite a different and, doubtless, the correct sense of the passage. Our own authorized Version has *goodlier;* and this reading has been adopted in the Translation of the Vulgate, approved by the authority of the Irish Roman Catholic Archbishops and Bishops in 1829, although it professes to be carefully collated with the Clementine edition. (See Dupin. Eccl. Hist., Cent. xvi., B. 5.)

dared us to it. I considered it to be a great sin to make the attack without having first secured the Divine favour by expiatory sacrifices. Supposing that something new had occurred to prevent thee from being here in time, I for this reason anticipated thy coming, and I have offered the sacrifice." "Is it then so?" rejoined Samuel. "*Thou hast done foolishly:* I accordingly pronounce against thee, that just as GOD, hadst thou waited for me patiently, would have perpetuated thy government over the people, so now none of thy family shall succeed thee on the throne; *The Lord would have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever; but now*—(ponder well, my brethren, the terrible denunciation)—*but now thy kingdom shall not continue.*" But, after all, it was no such great thing to lose by this act the kingdom: far worse was it for him to lose his religion, far worse to lose the favour of GOD, far worse to lose his soul, far worse to lose Paradise. Observe how this came to pass. He did not absolutely bring ruin upon himself by virtue of this one act. No, Sirs; for many well approved writers have considered his sin in this matter not to have been so very aggravated, either because he understood he was only to wait till the morning of the seventh day, or because he felt himself compelled to yield to the clamorous impatience of his soldiers, as he seems to intimate himself, when he says in self-defence, *I forced myself therefore and offered sacrifice.* If so, in what sense did he involve himself in ruin by virtue of this act? He did so, as by something, that inclined him to perdition; and not as by something, that at once determined it. I will explain what I mean. For this one act it was the will of GOD to deprive all his children and posterity of the kingdom; a loss to them of a mere temporal advantage, to which they had no claim. His design was, that a person of a different family should succeed to the throne, that is, David. And because, agreeably to the noble expression in the Book of Wisdom (xii. 18), "He gently disposes men's minds" to the accomplishment of His own fixed purposes, He brings about a favourable opportunity for removing David, then a mere shepherd's boy, from his flock to the Court. Saul himself is the first warmly to welcome him, as needing his services against the formidable

Goliath; but from the victories he sees him gaining over the Philistines, and from the loud applauses he hears him receiving from the soldiers, he recognises in him the very successor with whom he was threatened. From that time, he begins to regard him with that evil eye, with which rulers commonly behold the persons, destined to succeed them; he burns with hatred; he swells with venom. By a thousand ways he endeavours to murder him, now by darting javelins against him, now by setting assassins about his chamber, now by planting spies in his solitary path. He henceforth applied his mind far more carefully, than he was wont to do, to the interests he had in the kingdom, and far less carefully to the Commandments of his GOD. Wherefore, on being apprized that certain Priests at Nob had afforded shelter to his rival, he orders all of them to be massacred in his presence. And so we have before us the heart-rending spectacle of eighty-five Priests in their Sacred garments falling dead at his feet, under the assaults of a vile Idumean slave. Nor did this satiate his fury: for he further ordered that their city Nob should be abandoned to the fire, and sword, and to an undistinguishing slaughter of men, of women, of children, of the young, of the aged, no quarter to be allowed to the beasts, nor even to the very stones of the city. Advancing from one atrocity to another, he ultimately saw on the rugged heights of Gilboa those very sons, on whom he had founded his hope of establishing the kingdom, slain in battle; and then it was, that brought to utter desperation, he craves that he may die; but, finding no person to despatch him, he himself turns his sword against his bosom, inflicts the wound, tears open the flesh, murders himself; and thus, you see, "from the time of his first act of disobedience to Samuel having gradually more and more declined from virtue, he scrupled not at last to thrust himself into the very pit of destruction," as S. Chrysostom in his meditations on this appalling subject relates of him. Now I reason in this way. Had any one, when Saul was just on the point of transgressing the commands of Samuel, said to him; "Sire, mind well what you are about; for it is on this particular action of your life that your happiness here and in Eternity will finally depend." Would this in your opinion

have appeared to Saul at all possible? "What! from so trivial an action? No, it cannot, it cannot be. These are some of your formidable ghost stories, told to frighten women!" And yet, this really did so happen; not, observe it well, not because Saul had it not afterwards in his power entirely to keep aloof from all his subsequent wicked behaviour, but because this was now rendered so difficult for him to do, that he never did it; whereas it would have been most easy for one, who was at first so excellent a person that there was not *a better man than he*, had he only, without opposing his competitor or suspecting his successor, sat down contentedly to the enjoyment of his kingdom, as we believe he might.

From this striking narrative let us now draw a lesson, bearing on our own welfare; and let us in fear exclaim with S. Gregory; "Behold how much he lost, who thought he was despising a mere nothing!" So much lost for so very little! And what was this little? Alas! what, but that narrow pass, so to speak, on the boundary of which GOD, who is *great in counsel and mighty in work*, as Jeremiah calls Him (xxxii. 19), would test the obedience, the submission, the faithfulness of Saul, with a view to discover whether he would stand the trial; like one of those, of whom it is written, that "GOD proved them, and found them worthy of Himself" (Wisd. iii. 5). At that narrow pass, Saul stood not upright, but fell; and hence, depriving him of those greater assistances, which, according to the purpose of His own will, He had in store for him, GOD left him to sink by gentle degrees into perdition.

Now don't you believe, my brethren, that GOD often pursues a similar course with each individual among ourselves? How frequently will it happen, that the LORD may secretly in His heart say; "I wish to incline that married man to go and hear a particular sermon. If he go, then I will so effectually dispose his mind with *a grace to help in time of need*, that he shall cast off his bad female connection. With her once got rid of, he will no longer find it difficult regularly to attend Church and the Communion. By this means, he will gradually wean himself from many sinful habits, formed in his intercourse with society in the midst of the pleasures or

the business of the world. And then he will apply himself to the religious care of the family; he will live retired, and so he will die in peace. But, if he do not hear that sermon, then he will still retain his bad female connection; he will form new attachments; he will get entangled in fresh troubles, and embroil himself with other rivals, who will bring him to a miserable end. In like manner, in regard to that young man, I wish to induce him to go, and have some conference with his Pastor before the approaching Festival. Then I will proceed so effectually to work upon him with *a grace to help in time of need*, that he shall abandon the improper company he keeps. Once out of their reach, he will no longer find it irksome to engage seriously in his studies and religious duty. By this means, he will gradually become inflamed with many ardent desires to deny himself, to pray, and to seek retirement. And then, he will become fully resolved to devote himself entirely to GOD; and so he will mount rapidly to Heaven. But, if he does not go, and confer with his Pastor, he will still keep to his improper companions; he will contract more injurious habits; he will be caught in more dangerous snares; he will plunge into deeper excesses, which will carry him direct to hell." My dear Sirs, these are truths, most certain, beyond all controversy, irrefragable, unquestioned; only we cannot understand them at present, because of the thick veil upon our eyes: yet we shall understand them at the Day of Judgment, when, immediately on the removal of that veil, we shall discover those paths, by which GOD would have rejoiced to save us, or those, by which we preferred to destroy ourselves—*The way of Life and the way of death!*

And then, just like a lonely traveller, who in the dark gloomy night has, without knowing it, been on the very edge of the frightful precipice, every righteous soul will exclaim; "Oh, good LORD, on what a thread has my salvation depended! I was within a hair's breadth, instead of turning my feet into the way of Heaven, of wandering afar into the road to hell! *Unless the Lord had been my helper, my soul had almost dwelt in hell* (Ps. xciv. 17, Vulg.) It was that trifling good action in my life, that saved me—what I did in such a

place, on such a day, on such an occasion: had I omitted doing it, Oh, how totally different a turn might all my after-life have taken!" On the other hand, how intense will be the ravings of the reprobate, how piercing their groans, when they come to learn whence it happened, that they missed the direct way to Heaven! *They went astray and found no city to dwell in* (Ps. cvii. 4). "Ah, had I only listened to such a Sermon! Ah, had I only abandoned such a companion! Ah, had I given up such an amusement! Ah, if I had but declined on that particular evening to be present at that party, at that revel, at that comedy! There is now no remedy ever left me! Wretch that I am, I am left without a remedy for ever! Behold how much I have lost, when I thought I was despising a mere nothing!"—Suffer me now to rest for a few moments.

The Second Part.

6. You cannot, I see, contain within yourselves any longer the vehement objections you would urge against me. Speak out then fearlessly. Vent at once all your dissatisfaction. "Oh, father," you will say, "if your doctrine to-day should be true, woe be unto us! We must then needs pass our days in constant terror and under the most distressing anxiety. Do, pray, listen. Did we know for a certainty what that trivial action was, which would prove the germ of our misery or of our happiness for the future, who can doubt but that we should be most careful to perform it? But, not knowing what the action is, which we have particularly to dread, we must then stand in fear of every thing; and we must then be always attaching the greatest importance to every petty trifle; and we must then never overlook one single failing, as being insignificant, nor one single emotion in our minds, as being of no consequence; but, on the contrary, we must, on every occasion, at every hour, at every moment, be narrowly attending to all sorts and kinds whatsoever of good deeds on a small scale, and studying thereby to make sure of our going to Heaven." My brethren, you really seem with your multitude of objections to be pressing too hard upon me. But

what answer would you have? Certainly, it can be no such difficult matter for me to concede certain truths, which, long before my time, Eternal Wisdom itself has conceded. I readily acknowledge therefore that all you have objected is perfectly just. I grant; yes, I grant every atom of it. For what else did S. Peter intend, when from his many previous arguments he derived that lesson, that fearful conclusion, *Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things ye shall never fall* (2 S. Pet. i. 10); as if he would briefly say, "My most beloved, suppose you that the business of your Eternal salvation is something you can transact at your leisure, when you have nothing else, during the livelong day, to do, or to think of? It is not so; it is a weighty business, an anxious, a tremendous business; one, that must keep your minds constantly on the stretch. *Give diligence, give diligence!* There must be toil, there must be travail, that you may advance, if not to absolute perfection, yet to something, as near it as may be. *The rather* give diligence; the more you do, the more you must consider yourselves bound to do"—"But most people don't act in this way"—I grant it; and therefore, "*Broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction*" (S. Matt. vii. 13)—"But only a very, very few act in this way"—I grant it; and therefore, "*Narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life.*" What else can I say? Can I preach otherwise, than according to the verdict of Infallible Truth? "Shall the Judge declare one thing, and the herald go and proclaim something different?" (S. Gregory.) Have I it in my power to frustrate the Gospel, to please you? Have I it in my power to corrupt it? What can I do to help you?

7. And really, were it, as you wish, pitiful indeed would their condition without exception be, who, on hearing Ecclesiastes say, *He that feareth God neglecteth nothing,* (vii. 18, Vulg.) have made such conscience not to give way to the smallest imperfections. No sooner did a Bernard, a Francis, a Benedict, experience within them the slightest wrong emotion of pleasure, than they employed every imaginable means to stifle it, and were willing to endure the severest hardships, in the defence and for the preservation of their innocency. . . .

But, do you suppose, that these holy men submitted to all such hardships from any idea, that by their trifling imperfections they had merited the punishment of hell, that they designed by these means to save their souls from that punishment? No surely: they were not so blind, as not to know how much constitutes "a sin unto death;" that it must be a sin, attended with aggravations, committed wilfully, with eyes open, with a high hand against GOD. Nevertheless, they dreaded every minor offence, as conscious of the fatal facility, with which sinners advance from the less to the greater. "He that contemneth small things, shall fall by little and little." (Ecclus. xix. 1.) These very words Eusebius once produced, in answer to certain persons, who, on observing the very strict self-discipline he exercised on himself for some slight foible, were offended. "Don't be surprised," he said, "I act thus from a fear, lest the devil should take occasion hence to war against my soul on a grander scale, and try to dispossess me of my soberness and integrity." He feared, lest a curious glance at some indifferent object should imperceptibly lead him to a gaze on a sinful one; and he felt by no means secure, should he once allow this, that from a gaze he would not advance to a sensation of pleasure, from a sensation of pleasure to a desire, from a desire to a consent, and from a consent to an act of wickedness; and so ultimately lay waste and desolate that fair spiritual fabric, which he had with such pains erected in his soul, according to the beautiful saying of the Preacher; "Unless a man hold himself diligently in the fear of the LORD, his house shall soon be overthrown." (Ecclus. xxvii. 3.)

You will say, that, in your case, the commission of a less fault gives ground to hope, that you will keep clear of a greater one, and that on this ground you have no such fear about you. But how can this be, when men so near perfection were entire strangers to any hope of this sort? Can it then ever be, that only in respect to *them* nature was so rebellious, Grace so stinted, Heaven so unrelenting, Salvation so arduous? Clothed, as they were, in sackcloth, and sprinkled with ashes, and covered with their gory wounds, they yet dreaded every slight aberration from duty, as a first step into

hell. And shall *you* have no such dread?—you, who are clothed in purple, fanned with perfumes, and distended with luxuries! Most cruel GOD! in that case, would I cry aloud —most cruel GOD! And what love, as a FATHER, what impartiality, as a Master, is this! To grant such superabundant help to persons, who immersed in the indulgences of the world gratify every bad passion, as they like; and then, to withhold it from those, who, for your sake, have secluded themselves from society, and engaged in a life of constant discomfort and mortification in every possible way! Is it right then, that these last should always stand in so great fear of themselves, while the others are passing their days in all this complete self-security? If so, then, inasmuch as one is more endangered by a life of strictness and self-denial, than by one of ease and recklessness, it would be better to throw the yoke off our shoulders at once, and to bid adieu to all severities. But foolish indeed would it be, were I to indulge in such complaints against GOD, knowing, as I do, that a Day is coming—yes! a Day is coming—when, in regard to every one of us, whatever our character may be, it will be clearly seen at what cost we must be saved. The kingdom of Heaven—Alas! it is not the portion of all men. To enter it, we must make our way by main force, by deadening those unruly lusts, which retard our progress. *Strive to enter in at the strait gate,* says our LORD—*Strive, strive.*—And what does this *striving* mean? Does it mean, be careful? Does it mean, be laborious? This falls short of its import. It means what S. Luke expresses most fearfully in that significant Greek word, *Agonize.* It means that, when necessity so demands, we should submit to the extremest agonies, that we should hold friends, property, reputation in utter contempt, and, to crown the whole, should despise even life itself.

8. I know that people are far from relishing this kind of doctrine, and that they flock more readily after preachers, who speak to them of "peace and safety," than after those, who awaken their fears. But did I not tell you at first, that, from the nature of my subject, I could only inspire you with fear? You ought rather to pity me, than to take offence. I also should be quite as ready, as others are, to tickle your

ears; gladly would I flatter your turn of mind; gladly would I conciliate your good will, were it not evident to me that by such unfaithful dealing I should, for the sake of pleasing you for a moment, be leading you to a perdition without end. I will therefore conclude with S. Augustine; "Brethren, I wish to be had in great fear among you." Truly there is a need of fear, of much fear; for a holy fear is much more profitable to your souls than a presumptuous security. "It is better not to puff you up with a false assurance." In regard to myself, "What I have not received I will not give." How can I give you what I do not possess? Were I sure myself, I would make you sure as well. But I tremble, but I quake, but I shudder all over, when I consider my soul. How then can I make you feel secure? And yet, are you aware, that still, in the work of our Salvation, there is one method of obtaining a considerable degree of security? It is by our always attending to that work in a spirit of fear, by our always making GOD our refuge, by our always committing ourselves to His Blessing. He, who does this, may *go in peace. Happy is the man that feareth always.* (Prov. xxviii. 14.)

SERMON XXII.

ON THE DUTIES OF SUPERFLUOUS WEALTH.

S. John vi. 12.

"Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost."

1. I venerate most profoundly every thing, that Christ did, during His sojourn on the earth in our mortal flesh. At the same time, I hope He will forgive me, if I tell Him my mind about it. Was then His conduct this day quite in accordance with a God of His character? If He wished to make a display before this famished multitude, not only of His bountiful Providence and compassion, but of His munificence, in so profusely supplying their wants, why, just afterwards, should He in this miserly way grudge them a few broken fragments? Why not suffer them to deposit them in their bags? Why not allow them to carry them home? Why require, that even to the last crumb they should all be strictly restored to Him, as if otherwise they would be lost? *Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost?* Why did He insist upon this? I will tell you at once without further comment. It was to accustom these multitudes, who were now themselves well fed, not to reserve any surplus for their own use, but willingly to surrender it for the relief of other men's hunger. This, my hearers, you will find, on inquiry, to be the law, long since established by God, in regard to all His creatures. If abundant rains come down upon the earth, when parched and thirsty, it drinks what suffices for the revival of its own natural moisture, and leaves the remainder to run off for the

benefit of something else. If a branch of a vine is full of sap, it does not attract more to itself, but relinquishes the remainder for other branches. If the fruit of a tree has plenty of juice, it covets no more, but foregoes its claim, in favour of other fruits more withered and stunted. You find the same law, in regard to flowers, to corn, to the herbs of the field; in each case they pass on to some next-door neighbour the nourishment, found to be more than enough for their own consumption. Thus, the clouds, when oppressed with an excess of vapours, instantly discharge them. Thus, the atmosphere, when inflamed with an excess of heat, instantly spreads it abroad. In short, all creation speaks the same language, teaching us not to reserve a surplus for our own use. But how does this affect you? Are you equally careful, my Christians, always to observe this particular law? Or, rather, out of covetousness and from a greedy grasping mind, do you retain that, which in all reason you should communicate to the poor? Behold me, then, here in the midst of you, come in the name of the poor to wrest it from you. But why did I say, to wrest it from you? Have I then forgotten, that I am preaching in a city, which being wholly devoted to religion does not require a person should use violence, in order to get hold of its money? Well then, don't expect to hear me pressing my demand upon you in any such harsh, offensive, overbearing manner, as would be quite unworthy of you. I will reserve this for my address to some other less tractable audience, and shall content myself with faithfully explaining the duties of your superfluous wealth, confident of my succeeding with you: for, though it is hardly possible to get at the fruit of the wild tree, except by dint of beating and shaking it, yet, to the tree, that is well cultivated, you have only to reach forth your hand, and the fruit will drop into it.

2. One of the most serious errors in all the world is, I believe, that most extravagant opinion, entertained by many, that they are the absolute masters of their entire property; so that they may launch out in every kind of wasteful expenditure, even to the extent, with some philosophers of old, of throwing their riches into the sea out of mere ostentation. But Ah, it is not so: they are the masters; yes, but not the

absolute masters. There is a reserve, there is a restriction. And what is it?—this same obligation, I just mentioned, to distribute among the poor whatever remains, after our own wants have been fairly supplied. I am aware that this doctrine is distasteful to men's ears. I know that many theologians have, in consequence, laboured hard to smooth and soften it down, by limiting its application to those cases alone, where the poor are, as we say, in a state of urgent destitution. But the unanimous voice of holy men is so contrary to this opinion, as really to alarm one. Hear S. Augustine, how he expresses himself without any limitation: "Whatever remains, except for the reasonable purpose of food and clothing, let it not be reserved for luxuries, but be laid up in the Heavenly treasury by almsgiving. If we fail to do this, we are invading other people's property." The same in numberless passages is the positive doctrine of S. Chrysostom, of Basil, of Bede, of Theophylact; and Gaudentius wrote to Germinius in these words; "Nothing in this life is really our own"—But how so?—"The stewardship of our LORD's goods is entrusted to us, either for our own moderate use, or for distribution among our fellow servants. Hence, it is not lawful for us to alienate them by any superfluous expenditure; since of our mode of spending them we must give an account to the LORD at His coming." Nor do S. Ambrose, S. Gregory, S. Jerome, and T. Aquinas differ in the least from this opinion. The latter clearly and invariably teaches, that the strict obligation we lie under to give alms rests on two principles, either of them quite enough of itself without the other to bind our consciences. One arises from the state of the poor man; the other from the state of the rich man: on the side of the poor man, from his want; on the side of the rich man, from his abundance. Where the necessity of the poor man is very urgent, the obligation is in force, although the rich man have no superfluity: where the rich man has a superfluity, the obligation is in force, although the necessity of the poor man be not very urgent. Nor should this surprise us. For it would indeed have been a strange dispensation, on the part of GOD, after all the careful provision He has made to clothe so gloriously the flowers of the field, to feed

the ravens and the fowls of the air, to support the meanest creeping things of the earth, even in respect of their ordinary wants, if only in the case of the poor He had shown no care at all. Is He not then equally a FATHER to every one of us? How then can this our common FATHER have provided so unequally for His children, that, while one has nothing to eat, another has the means of revelling in all manner of luxury? while one has no clothes on his back, another has the means of indulging in the proudest finery?[1] Is GOD then," says S.

[1] The Translator has never met with a more satisfactory solution of the difficult question, arising from the unequal manner, in which earthly goods are apportioned to different persons, than that, given by the admirable Dr. Hammond. As this subject is one of great interest and importance in itself, and seems at the present day to be not quite properly understood by many well-meaning philanthropists (not to say, positively misunderstood by some ill-meaning levellers) at the risk of intruding an unusually long note, he ventures here to give the following extract:

"Though we assert not an *equality* of worldly riches from any decree, either of GOD or nature, find not any statute of 'all things in common,' in any but Plato's institutions, and those never committed to practice in any one city in the world . . . . yet, I may suppose it for a granted maxim that the *extreme inequality*, that is now so illustriously visible in the world, is not any act of nature's primary intention, or GOD'S first and general Providence . . . . Satan and covetousness brought it into the world; and then GOD finding it there (whose glorious attribute it is to extract good out of evil, as He did once a SAVIOUR out of a destroyer), by His particular Providence ordered and continued this effect of some men's covetousness, to become matter of others' bounty . . . . and so, *ex his lapidibus*, out of these stones, out of the extreme want and necessity of our brethren, to raise trophies and monuments of virtue to us . . . . So that now we may define it an act of GOD'S infinite Goodness to permit, though before we could not allow it to be reconcileable with His infinite Justice to decree, the extreme inequality of earthly portions . . . . that thou by thy wealth mayest be that Elijah, sent from Heaven to the famishing forlorn widow, that GOD-like man, dropt out of the clouds to her relief . . . . Admirable therefore was that contrivance of GOD'S mercy and wisdom, mentioned to the Jews, not as a threatening, but a promise of Grace, one of the privileges and blessings of Canaan; *The poor shall never cease out of the land* (Deut. xv. 11); that thou mayest always have somewhat to do with thy wealth, some sluice to exhaust thy plenty, some hungry leech to open a vein, and prevent the access of thy fever . . . . You see then the pedigree and genealogy of almsgiving, how it came into the world. Covetousness, and oppression, and rapine brought in emptiness, beggary, and want: then, GOD'S Providence and Goodness, finding it in the world, resolves to continue it there, to employ the treasures and exercise the charity of others." *Dr. Hammond*, (Sermon, Deut. xxvi. 12, 13; entitled "The poor man's tithing.") Conf. S. Matt. xxvi. 11.

What a wondrous insight had our all but inspired Shakspeare into this truth,

Ambrose, "unjust, that He does not portion out fairly the supports of our lives, so that, while thou hast affluence and abundance, others are in want and destitution?" May be, He is unjust? May be, He is partial? May be, He is unwise? May be, He is inconsiderate? May be, He is incapable? What horrible blasphemies? We must therefore maintain, that for the poor also, when unable to support themselves by their own industry, He has made a suitable provision for the supply of their necessities—their common, as well as greatest necessities; charging it, so that it may never fail them, upon the surplus found in the rich man's portion; just as He once charged the provision for the stars upon that deluge of light, with which He had enriched the Sun. *That, which remaineth, give in alms.* (S. Luke xi. 41, Vulg.) Hence, whatsoever *remaineth,* whether in the shape of food, or clothing, or anything else you please, belongs to the poor. T. Aquinas in his Summary has thus commented on this text. "God *commands* all superfluities to be given to the poor." He does not say, He "exhorts;" no, He says, He *commands.* This being granted, what, my hearers—those among you, who are so wedded to their luxuries—what are you doing? When will you begin to form a serious and just estimate of your bounden duty? Awake, bestir yourselves; and never suppose, that it is no such great sin in you thus coolly to spend your whole income upon yourselves, under this notion that you are not merely the entire, but the arbitrary masters of it. If you go on after this fashion, I must plainly tell you, you will never be able to save your souls; never, never. To hell you must, for a certainty, go.

3. Who among you does not remember that rich man, described by S. Luke? Heaven had granted him the blessing of an abundant harvest. On this, instead of laying his head more composedly on his pillow, he began, as people will do,

when he puts into the mouth of King Lear that fine moral, those deeply affecting words:—

> "Oh, I have ta'en
> Too little care of this! Take physic, pomp;
> Expose thyself, to feel what wretches feel;
> *That thou may'st shake the superflux to them,*
> *And shew the heavens more just!*" (Act iii. sc. 2.)

very anxiously to turn the matter over in his mind; "*What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits* (xii. 17)? Come, I know what to do. I will enlarge my store houses; *I will pull down my barns and build greater.* And I will bid my soul take its pleasure; for now it has good store for many many long years; *Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.*" But what followed? No sooner had he only resolved on doing this, not to say actually done it, than he heard a most tremendous voice from heaven, sounding in his ears; *O fool! O fool!* Are these then the projects thou art deciding upon? Dear will they cost thee. *But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee! Then whose shall these things be, which thou hast provided?* Brethren, I must tell you my mind. The very blood in my veins runs cold, when I hear this story. For what did this man ever purpose doing, which ever awakens in your consciences any suspicion, at least any strong suspicion, of sin? He said, he intended first to take down his store houses, and then to rebuild them; *I will pull down my barns and build greater.* Well; but is there one here, who would deem this a matter of conscience? So far from it, how many there are, born in fine roomy palaces, who are yet not satisfied, but are for ever occupied in building and then taking down, in taking down and then building! He said, that he intended then to give himself a little rest; *I will say to my soul, Take thine ease.* And is it any such great sin to take a little ease? Had he told us, that his intention was to bring some iniquitous suit against his neighbour, to murder a man, to assassinate him, or to indulge in some dreadful acts of debauchery, I could well understand him. But what was the harm in his now and then prolonging his morning slumber on his bed of down? He said, that he intended henceforth to have good cheer at his table; *Eat, drink, and be merry.* But are we not aware how difficult some theologians have found it to get gluttony ranked among the deadly sins, albeit in so many cases it causes premature death? Why then, under these extenuating circumstances, was this unhappy man so awfully numbered among *fools*, that is, among the reprobate? Hear,

why it was, from the very lips of our LORD—because, in the midst of his superfluities, he would keep everything to himself. It was for this reason our LORD came to this conclusion; *So is he, that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God.* How pestilent a word is that—*for himself!* To absorb all, *for himself!* Oh, what greediness! Oh, what voracity! Oh, what a wrong done to the neglected poor! We should act the part of a canal, and not that of a Charybdis.[1] Hence, you observe, my brethren, it is not said of this glutton that he was sentenced to hell for being incestuous, or for being a murderer, or for being perjured, or for being a blasphemer; but simply because, while he sat filling his own belly with his superfluous cheer, he cruelly withheld it from his starving neighbour; or, supposing he did give him something, he did not give him, as S. Augustine seemed to think, what was sufficient: "He supplied him not with food sufficient:"[2] which is the reason of its being said, not that the poor man desired to *eat* of the crumbs, which fell from the rich man's table—for this was allowed him—but he desired to be *filled;* which was the very thing refused him. Now, it is far from unlikely, had this happened in our time, that this glutton would have fallen in with some bland theologian, kindly willing to take his part, and to say; "What need has this beggar to be continually stationing himself before your door? Are there no other wealthy citizens in Jerusalem, to whom he might apply, just as well as to you? Send him about his business. Off with him. It is true, he is *full of sores;* but he is not so lame, as to be incapable of stirring." Still, after all, the glutton is gone down to hell; and, take notice, he is not there after a common sort; he is buried in its lowest depths; He was *buried in hell.* (S. Luke xvi. 22.) And why? I, who am an ignorant man, can only account for it, because he rolled in affluence and did not give alms; in proportion, at least, to his means. "He supplied him not with food sufficient." This then is the rule. Let the man, who has abundance, give. *Your abundance must be*

[1] Here again, as at Serm. xix. 2, Segneri puts into an epigrammatic form the sum and substance of the important lesson, he is teaching us, the more to impress it in our minds. ***Bisogna far da canale, non da Cariddi.***

[2] See Deut. xv. 8.

a supply to their want. So the Apostle charged his Corinthians. (2 Cor. viii. 14.) This want, you will observe, is a kind of necessity, but not an extreme, nor even a very grievous necessity. In this respect it rather corresponds with our idea of indigence, than of downright pauperism. Did we limit the obligation before us exclusively to cases of such extreme grievous necessity, the call to give would in our day but very seldom occur; nor would the Divine Scriptures then have contained so many complaints, alarms, outcries, and denunciations against the rich, supposing them to have failed in their duty in such very few instances. Can a more common necessity exist, than the one, those people are under, who day after day persecute us through the streets with their troublesome importunities? Nevertheless, hear the terrific appeal, urged upon us in their behalf; "Turn not away thine eye from the needy, and give him none occasion to curse thee; for, if he curse thee in the bitterness of his soul, his prayer shall be heard of Him, that made him." (Ecclus. iv. 5, 6.) Hence it is my belief, that the strongest, or, at least, the most frequent obligation we have to give alms does not arise from the fact of the necessity the poor man lies under, but rather from the fact of the *abundance* the rich man possesses.

4. Very well, you will answer; but here we have the whole difficulty. Have we this abundance you talk of? Rather, in these times, who does not find it a difficult matter to live up to his position in society? The world has now reached such a tip-top of fashion, in regard to dress, jewellery, fineries, equipages, furniture, costly services of plate, that, were our present income doubled, it would barely suffice to maintain us in a style of decent living, becoming our station and character. What would you have me say, in reply to this, my beloved hearers? Why, if you take the practice of the world in its present demoralized state, as the rule of your conduct, it must be, as you pretend: there can be no alternative: and accordingly it will be necessary that CHRIST be compelled to come down from that Mountain, on which He first opened His mouth, and breaking off His Sermon in the middle that He must put a final stop to all those His sublimest lessons, in which He forbade our over-solicitude about food and cloth-

ing: for now all such lessons are quite impracticable. Our rule of conduct, however, must not be taken from a world, lying in vanity; since S. James has already pronounced, that, *He, who would be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God* (iv. 4.) From whence then are we to take it? From the world, restored to its senses, from the world made wise, or, better still, from the world's Reformer, from Him, whose Will it is that every one of His disciples should renounce at their Baptism all the pomps of the devil: and what are they, but your empty vanities, your fineries, your reckless expenditure, your extravagant dissipation? Only then take this rule in your hand, this good honest rule of the Sanctuary. Oh, how many will be the superfluities I shall then discover, if not in all, yet in most of you! And, should I here be unable to explain to you with exact precision what this may be, the reason is, because, although we can very well define what in particular cases is superfluous, as when we set about pruning the too luxurious shoots of trees in an orchard, yet on a general scale we cannot do this. But, in truth, what need have you of my services in this business? Are you not quite competent of yourselves to decide what constitutes a superfluity, in matters of religious obligation, according to your rank in life? You take great care in this never to exceed what others do—not what monks and hermits, but what laymen just of your own standing do—persons, whose rule it is to celebrate the Octave by frequenting Churches, by receiving the Holy Communion, by attending other Ordinances; all which things you readily pronounce to be in your case quite unnecessary. And how is it then that you are not quite as competent to decide of yourselves what constitutes a superfluity, in matters of worldly obligation; but no sooner do you see people of your own rank launching out into those extravagancies I mentioned, in dress, jewels, finery, equipages, and such-like expenses, than you at once conclude it to be quite necessary that you should do just the same? Ah, yes! This ignorance you plead is all a pretence. *This they are willingly ignorant of;* so say I with S. Peter (2 S. Pet. iii. 5). For, as in the one case you know of your own selves what is really superfluous, so, in all reason, you ought to know it in the

other. I therefore put the matter between us thus. Beyond question you are allowed to keep up your position with credit; but not in a conformity with those practices, which a candid exercise of your own judgments must lead you to regard in the light of so many abuses.

5. On looking, however, well into this matter, it will appear, that what makes you always consider yourself to be so poor is not the demand, made upon you, to keep up a certain position; it is the desire you have to better that condition. No one now contents himself, as Job did, with dying in the nest, that gave him birth, with saying unto God; *I shall die in my nest* (Job xxix. 18.) The countryman wishes to be a citizen, the citizen wishes to be a cavalier, and the cavalier aspires to a place in the Government; and, should he ever mount so high, what will then satisfy his ambition? *Behold, he will drink up a river, and not wonder* (Job xl. 23, Vulg.) He will swallow a *Nile*-full of gold with the ease, with the perfect indifference of one, taking a draught of water; and, when he has once gulped down all this profane gold, he will have a longing for the gold of the Sanctuary;[1] *He trusteth that the Jordan may run into his mouth.* If then we are to consider it allowable for a man to appropriate to his own use whatever may be needful, not only to the support, but to the aggrandizement of his condition, I grant that there will be no balance left in your hands for giving alms. But don't you see, what an advantage the ambitious will then have over other rich men?

6. I too very much wish you to improve your condition. Yes, Sirs; but in what way?—in the way, that is praiseworthy. Improve yourselves in knowledge, improve yourselves in piety, improve yourselves in every instance of a modest and charitable life; and by so doing you will attain real glory. Do you think to render yourselves illustrious by the glitter of your servants' livery, outshining that of your neighbours? by the number of dogs and horses you keep about you? or, by changing your humble dwelling into a gorgeous palace? Quite the contrary. This will rather help to perpetuate the

[1] Church property and preferment; the sacred *Jordan*, in this sense, distinguished from the common *Nile*.

disgrace of your name. For what will people, when they see you launching out in all kinds of extravagance, be inclined to say? They will naturally call to mind the avarice of the man, who got you this estate, his extortion, his rapacity, his hardness to the poor. And so it will turn out with you, as it did with those builders, who in their anxiety for a world-wide reputation erected the lofty tower of Babel, exciting one another to the work, crying out; *Come let us make our name famous* (Gen. xi. 4, Vulg.) From the very quarter, whence they expected celebrity, they reaped nothing but confusion. Do you desire a glory, that shall be solid, sure, and lasting? Then be Almsgivers. Among all other virtues, this is the one, to which an everlasting renown is promised; "All the Churches of the Saints shall declare his alms" (Ecclus. xxxi. 11, Vulg.) An entire community is rarely of one mind in commending any man's virtues. What one person calls justice, another calls severity; what one calls prudence, another calls expediency; what one calls forbearance, another calls timidity. But no one likes to raise a cavil against beneficence, it being a virtue so generally useful, so welcome, so everywhere admired. And therefore it is not said, his justice, no, nor his prudence, nor his forbearance; but what? "*His alms* all the Churches of the Saints shall declare." Hence it was, that even that babbler of a Macignus, who in his barefaced insolence was wont to ridicule the many surprising works of S. Charles Borromeo, on his being told afterwards how he gave up richly endowed abbeys, how he freely dispersed his money, how he stripped himself of all his possessions, that he might benefit his poor neighbours, was at once silenced, or rather was brought publicly to retract his old slanders. "Well," said he, "now I *do* believe you." To such a degree will evil speakers of the very worst kind unite in commending the charitable man; *He, that hath a bountiful eye, shall be blessed* (Prov. xxii. 9.) This then, my hearers, is that real glory, to which I would have you aspire, in preference to what you now so vainly anticipate from your profligate expenditure. It is quite true, that in this way you will have no surplus left you. But why? You will have given it all away for the sake of God.

7. But if, not content with this glory, you further desire to have your family property assured to you, to have it increased and enlarged, so that you may abound in every thing, still act in the same way I have just recommended. You tell me, that you do not give away in alms, because you have no money; and I tell you, that you have no money, because you do not give away in alms. *He that giveth to the poor shall not lack.* (Prov. xxviii. 27.) But why limit the expression thus; *he shall not lack?* This is saying far too little; because he, who giveth alms, shall not only not be reduced to penury—just as the well of water loses nothing by what it gives—but he shall become rich by this seeming method of impoverishing himself. Hear what the same wise Monarch wrote in another place; *Honour the Lord with thy substance.* (Prov. iii. 9.) What then will follow? *So shall thy barns be filled with plenty and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.* Oh, ye rich! Oh, ye moneyed men! Oh, ye insatiable misers! What, in this case, are you doing? Why banish yourselves from your paternal homes, and wander abroad to get more money? Why cross all these Apennines? Why traverse all these Alps? Why risk your lives in all these voyages at sea? I can tell you a way to effect your object far more expeditiously. Steer back to the shore, and no more hazard yourselves on a fragile plank. Are you so exceedingly anxious to have your barns well filled, and your cellars well stored? Here is the way. Do honour to God every day of your life by giving alms. *Honour the Lord with thy substance;* and, while staying at home, you will see how your ordinary industry will suffice to make you happy. *Thy barns shall be filled with plenty and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.* What say you to these very plain assurances? Do you not believe that they come from God? For you to deny this would be heresy; for they are in the Book of Proverbs. But, if they come from God, what causes you a doubt? Do you question His power to fulfil them? This would be to treat Him, as a bankrupt.—His will then to do so? This would be setting Him down, as a liar. Try Him, put Him to the proof, and you will very soon see how faithful He is. *Prove Me now herewith, saith the Lord of Hosts*—the very words He once

spoke by the Prophet Malachi on this very point—*Prove Me now herewith, if I will not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing—a blessing*, of what magnitude? *A blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it;* the very thing I promised you.

8. You will tell me, that were it so, the greatest misers in the world, would, all of a sudden, become the greatest almsgivers, from a desire to accumulate the greatest amount of wealth by such means. I grant you that they would become this, were they only to begin to place some little trust in GOD. But here lies all the difficulty—in their making this beginning. Even all our libertines would, on this principle, become chaste, could they but begin to experience the joys of a pure heart. Even all our laymen would hence become cloistered men, could they but begin to taste the delights of GOD's service. But there is no danger of their all being thus transformed, because there is no danger of their all resolving to overcome those primary difficulties, which in every undertaking are the most severe. However, trust my word. Almsgiving, as a general rule, my hearers, is the true method, whereby to secure your family property, to enlarge, to increase it; for it is the most easy and at the same time the most certain way to get gain. It is the easiest, because it is giving on usury; it is the safest, because it is investing in a bank, which cannot fail you. *He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord.* (Prov. xix. 17.) Whereas what comes of treating them with harshness? It will by gradual stages involve you in ruin. *He that hideth his eyes from the poor shall have many a curse.* (xxviii. 27.) Read the Archbishop of Tours, and you will see how a vessel laden with corn, belonging to a certain lady named Tarasia, sunk at the very time, when she was refusing to give a loaf to a poor man. Read Metaphrastes, and you will see how eleven vessels laden with goods, belonging to a merchant named Faustinianus, were lost at the very hour, when he was disputing the right to a plot of ground with some poor people. Read divers authors, even of our own time, and you will see how a vast herd of cattle ate up all the corn, belonging to a Swiss, named Chiggere, because in a time of scarcity he kept it locked up from the

poor. Therefore, this excuse of yours really comes to nothing, when you allege, as a reason for not being charitable, your fear, lest you should impair your condition. But be it so; you wish then—don't you—to improve your condition? Well, give to the poor. By this means you will not only succeed, as I said, in preserving it, but you will increase it too, by reason of the very ample and very secure credit you will hereby establish with GOD. For, as Zeno argued, "What can exceed the riches of the man, to whom GOD declares Himself to be a debtor?"

9. But wait a moment: for I have no wish that the remunerations you are expecting from GOD, on account of your alms, should ever be such, as are of a perishable nature. Ah, what are we here, in this life, but foreigners, or rather pilgrims, mere passengers; so that earthly goods serve rather to encumber, than to help us? I would therefore advise you always to ask of Him a place in His Heavenly Kingdom, a place in Heaven, and not to care about the increase of your riches here below, while you are at a distance from your true home. Please to tell me; were a person, indebted to you for a considerable sum, to meet you by chance, as you were returning from a foreign country, to meet you, when quite alone, in the midst of some forest, some out-of-the-way corner, some place, infested by robbers, and were he, then and there, to propose to settle his debt with you, would you not beg him to wait, till you had reached your home? Act towards GOD in the same manner. Beseech Him to defer making you rich, till you get safely to Heaven. And, should your frequent charities in the interval somewhat reduce you in your circumstances, so much the better. Welcome poverty, when incurred for the LORD'S sake! "Lose thy money for thy brother," says the Preacher. (Ecclus. xxix. 10.) Lose it, lose it; lose thy money; for this is to be an almsgiver in the true sense of the word. So long as your money is lying in your name in the funds, you have no great cause for boasting; you are doing no more, than those fountains in the streets, which look extremely bountiful, when in fact they are not so; for, in proportion as they give water to others, they receive it themselves.

Thus far I have spoken of the obligation, pressing upon you to distribute freely among the poor, out of your superabundance, according to your station in life. And this I insist upon. Still, I have no wish here to mislead you; because it is one thing for you to be obliged to give only that, at least in ordinary cases, and quite another thing for you to have nothing else, but that, to give. Naturalists inform us of the basilisk, that it always prefers solitude at its meals; yet, notwithstanding this, when its appetite is satisfied, that it will by a pleasant hissing sound invite others to come and enjoy what it has left. It would appear from this, that, while you do nothing more, for the sake of GOD, than give away your leavings—excuse my boldness—you are only doing what eagles, and vultures, nay more, what fierce dragons are wont to do. Surely it is meet that you should all aspire to something far beyond this; even to be able to say with holy Job; *If I have eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof.* (xxxi. 17.) Were nothing to be left you, so to speak, but a dry crust of bread, yet even this, you ought to share with the poor. Then indeed I will allow you to be giving them what is your own. As long as you give them the surplus, you give what is not your own, but theirs. "The superfluities of the rich," says holy Father Augustine, "are the poor man's necessaries. To take your superfluities for yourself is to appropriate that, which belongs to others."

10. A lingering doubt, I know, may still remain on your minds. It is this. If you are all under an equal obligation thus to give away in alms whatsoever remains in hand, after the deduction, made for your own decent maintenance, then there will be no difference between you, who possess family property, and those, who possess Church property. But here you are in error. The difference between the two cases is immense; because he, who is amply provided with mere secular wealth, has only to give alms, when he meets a man in distress: for which reason S. John said, *Whoso hath this world's goods and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?* (1 S. John iii. 17.) Hence it follows, whenever he does not *see* him, in other words, whenever he is ignorant of

his distress, he is not obliged, as T. Aquinas inferred, to find out the case for himself, to search into it, and anxiously to satisfy himself about it. But they, who hold Church property, are obliged to do this. "Whatever the Clergy possess," writes S. Jerome in his Epistle to Damasus, "belongs to the poor; they ought to be closely on the watch for opportunities of taking orphans, strangers, and indigent persons under their fostering care." And the reason is; because nothing more is required of laymen in a private department of life, than that they should act towards the poor in the character of brothers; and that so, when asked, they should relieve them. Whereas, in the case of the Clergy, this is not enough: they must act towards the poor in the character of Fathers, whose duty it is not only to listen to the petitions of their children, but to anticipate them.

On the other hand, it is perfectly true, that the Clergy also have a certain respectability to maintain in their calling; but then it is much more easy to find out, generally, what constitutes a superfluity in their calling, than it is in yours. And this for two reasons; first, as they belong to the tribe of Levi, they are called to a life far less encumbered with worldly cares and worldly dependencies, in the spirit of that noble declaration, (Deut. xxxiii. 9,) made by Levi, of his exclusive devotedness to GOD; and then, as the Council of Trent enjoins, the Clergy have not only, far above all other persons, to despise the vanities of the world, but they have, moreover, openly to express how they despise it. "In their whole mode of living, nothing should be seen in them, which does not manifest their contempt of all such vanities." Thus you see, that the difference between the two cases is immense. Yet how does this bear on our main point? It is enough for you to know that the Clergy are guilty of sacrilege, when they dispute their leavings with the poor: while you laymen, in acting thus, are guilty of robbery. What therefore must you do? Why, overcome that immoderate love of money, which has such ascendancy over you. You must root it up; you must pluck it out, bearing in mind, that, under all circumstances, there are only two gates by which we can enter Heaven; one of them, that of pain; the other, that of pity.

You can scarcely hope to enter by the gate of pain, seeing that you are so wedded to a life of indulgence. You must therefore needs effect your entrance by the gate of pity; and don't you see, what folly it is for you to decline the purchase of endless happiness, even at so low a price, as that of giving alms? "There is, that buyeth much for a little;" we read in Ecclesiasticus. (xx. 12.) But who is this buyer? The man, who giveth alms. For, though liable to punishment for his many sins, yet he has not to clothe himself in sackcloth, nor has he to gird himself about with a chain, nor has he to squeeze the blood out of the veins of his body. It is enough for him to give, not of his blood, but of his possessions; since alms-deeds possess a singular property in pleasing GOD. It is that, which will "purge away sins," as the angel assured old Tobit, "and which maketh to find mercy." (xii. 9, Vulg.[1]) It "purges away sins," as to their penalty; it "maketh to find mercy," as to their fault; it does not actually "find" it, as do confession and contrition, which obtain it for us; but it "maketh to find," because it disposes the soul, with certainty I might almost say, to its reception. "It shall be a great confidence before the Most High GOD to all those, that give it." (iv. 12, Vulg.) Now why should it be so? I confess my inability to explain this to you. I can

[1] Expressions, almost equally strong, and supported by the same texts, in commendation of alms-deeds, are used in the Homily of our Church on this subject. Only in that Homily the doctrine is guarded from misinterpretation by the subsequent statement; "that we, doing these things, according to GOD's will and our duty, have our sins indeed washed away, and our offences blotted out, not for the worthiness of them, but by the grace of GOD, which worketh all in all; and that, for the promise, that GOD hath made to them, that are obedient to His commandment, that He, which is the Truth, might be justified in performing the truth due to His promise. Almsdeeds do wash away our sins, because GOD doth vouchsafe then to repute us, as clean and pure, when we do them for His sake, and not because they deserve or merit our purging, or for that they have any such strength and virtue in themselves." Segneri here, does not think it necessary to digress, in order to prevent his argument from being misunderstood. He merely observes, indirectly, that the rewards, promised to almsgiving, are "*very much beyond its deserving;*" and, as to the merit of all good works, generally, he is careful in other places to ascribe it solely to GOD, working in us, and afterwards crowning with a reward His own gifts. Refer, only a few pages back, to Serm. xix. 6; "*All comes of the grace of God. All is His work. All is His merit.*"

only say, that, unless I mistake the matter, God has been pleased to distinguish this virtue very much beyond its deserving, that He might thereby provide with greater certainty for that numerous class of persons, who, having for the benefit of the public to live exposed to endless wants and necessities, would, very probably, but for this provision, be left to pine away in distress; the covetous never noticing them, even in their lowest condition.

11. Accordingly, you see, that Christ at the last great Day will not lay the chief stress on proclaiming the illustrious deeds of men in other relations of life. He will proclaim their works of mercy alone. "That Abel suffered, that Noah saved the world, that Abraham embraced the faith, and, if you will, that Peter ascended the cross with his back turned towards it—all this God passes by in silence: one thing only He proclaims"—so spake Peter Chrysologus, astounded at it—"One thing only God proclaims, that the poor man has been fed!" And still do you hesitate to give to the utmost of your power, when such a reward is set before your eyes? Give, give, I say; for otherwise a day may come, when you will have bitterly, but ineffectually, to curse your own infatuation. I will now sum up with a passage from the Psalms, one of surpassing beauty. You may already have it often on your lips; but I know not, whether you have yet succeeded in extracting its most delicious flavour.

He hath dispersed abroad, he hath given to the poor. (Ps. cxii. 9.) Behold the alms-giver, who does not sell, as the covetous do, who does not bargain, who does not barter; but who gives outright. And he gives to those, from whom he cannot expect a return; he gives to the poor; and he gives much, and he gives to many, and he gives to all, whomsoever he finds in any common distress; so that he seems as one, quite throwing away his money—*He hath dispersed abroad, he hath given to the poor*—yet it is not so. This is not true; no, he does not throw it away—*His righteousness remaineth for ever;* His *righteousness,* for this name is often given in Scripture to alms, so nearly related are they to acts of justice. His *righteousness* shall prove Eternal both in its merit and in its reward; *it remaineth for ever. His horn shall be exalted with*

honour. You are aware that the term *horn* signifies strength, zeal, and dignity; but it also signifies a trumpet; and the Jews' custom, as Liranus writes, was to collect the poor together, when alms were to be distributed, by the sound of a trumpet; insomuch that, afterwards, on its becoming so much abused to purposes of ostentation or hypocrisy, this custom was prohibited by CHRIST in those words; *When thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee.* (S. Matt. vi. 2.) But this custom was highly to be praised, when observed from pure motives of charity; and therefore the Psalmist might well say; *His horn shall be exalted with honour.* At the last Day this trumpet will receive a stupendous crown of glory. Then will all the poor arise to heap blessings on the rich man, who once called them together, in their hunger, to replenish them with his bread. Him will the Angels bless; him will the Archangels bless; him JESUS Himself will bless by admitting him to a share in His kingdom. *The ungodly shall see it and it shall grieve him.* The ungodly shall see such an excellent glory, and shall go mad at the sight. Only conceive, that, down yonder in the market, there was exposed to sale a most valuable estate, with land attached to it exceedingly rich and productive; which estate yet was going for a comparative trifle. A miserly person steps forward, but as soon flinches back; for he cannot, for the sake of a few dollars, agree, as to the price. Another person makes his appearance, at once buys the estate, triumphs in his purchase, manages it in first-rate style, so that in a very few years it yields him an income almost beyond calculation. Only judge, whether that miserly wretch, on seeing this, will not die of envy: he *consumes away;* he frets, he stamps, he gnashes his teeth, actually becomes discoloured, as from the effect of poison. *The ungodly shall see it and it shall grieve him; he shall gnash with his teeth and consume away.* But what good does all this do him? Let him *desire* to buy such a property then, at any price whatsoever; it is too late. *The desire of the ungodly shall perish.* Christians, there is no need, that I should apply this to you; apply it for yourselves. I will only ask you; what, if you should be the person, at the last Day to rave so desperately for your immoderate love of money?

Let this never be. Come to terms now, while you are able; come to terms, I say: for otherwise, Oh, what will be your rage against yourself hereafter, and all too late! Look no longer with admiring gaze on certain folks, who so idolize their filthy lucre. Leave them to pocket their superfluities for their own use, contrary to what CHRIST has enjoined in the Gospel for this day. Let them take it home. Let them secure it under lock and key. Let them keep it, and make it as sure, as they can. Woe unto them! For they are the very persons, who never once, as the Prophet declares, never once derive any manner of good from all their possessions. *They retain their vanities for nothing.* (Jonah ii. 9, Vulg.)

THE SECOND PART.

12. Thus far it has been my wish to encourage you in giving liberally to the poor. But alas! it would not be surprising, were some, instead of relieving them, as I have advised, to be found acting, as their oppressors. Is it not a fact, that in these days we may well say with the preacher; "The rich eat up the poor" (Ecclus. xiii. 19)? There are rich men living, who extract from the sweat of the poor man, as from a most productive soil, everything they desire. From it they derive their food; from it they derive their clothing; from it they derive their all. They make them work, and they don't pay them for their work. Don't pay them, did I say? They scold, they cry out against them, they terrify them; they scruple not even to curse them. And should you ever be carried away, my hearers, by such transports, do you think you will not be strictly accountable for it? What! Dare to insult a tradesman, a labourer, a domestic, or any poor creditor, because, in your opinion, he is too pressing in demanding of you his due? Is this then the love you show to that necessitous class of people, so tenderly commended to us by CHRIST? Is this your gentleness towards them? Even Abraham, when he was obliged to refuse a drop of water to a man in hell, gave him at least good words. When he answered him, he did not say; "Ah, thou gluttonous beast! Ah, thou heartless wretch! Why come to me?

Go on burning; go on tormenting, and consuming thyself. It serves thee right." No; he called him, *Son;* he was content with reminding him, that, as he had once so fully enjoyed himself here, he ought not now to complain of suffering; *Thou in thy life-time hast received thy good things.* How then can you ever treat persons with such inhumanity, who perhaps will some day be exalted in Paradise above you? Supposing it quite out of your power to satisfy their demands, you ought, under all circumstances, to answer their importunities with gentleness, to treat them with civility, and to dismiss them with a kind look, at least, to comfort their hearts. You ought not to behave like those autumnal clouds, which, when the earth opens wide its hundred mouths, supplicating of them the long denied supplies of water, send them, by way of reply, a storm of hail, as if pelting them with stones.

But, if you are perfectly able to meet their demands, how can you ever ill-use them in this manner? Oh, the judgment, the ruin, the torture, the deep dungeon, that is in store for you! *For he shall have judgment without mercy, who showed no mercy* (S. James ii. 13). I leave you then to infer with S. Anselm, with S. Jerome, with S. Gregory, and with many other such, what their judgment will be, who to this lack of mercy add downright plunder? And what act of plunder more thoroughly heartless? It might indeed be tolerated, were the money, you snatch from them, theirs by inheritance, theirs without any toil, any trouble on their part in getting it; but the fact is otherwise. That money they have earned with their own hands, become rough and hard through incessant drudgery, with their watchings, with their going about from place to place, with their unremitting exertions. And how can you have the heart to cheat them of their hire in this sad reckless manner, when you often support your own luxuries, at the cost of their starving families? Francis of Paula, once boldly reproving Alphonso, King of Naples, for the oppressive taxes he laid upon his subjects, took in his hands some of the money, the collectors happened at that moment to be bringing into the Court. Splitting the coins in pieces before the King, he made him see with his own eyes, that what they distilled was all blood. Oh, my hearers,

that I could share with this holy man in a like power! Bless me! what blood—ay, what rivers of blood—would I make you see with your own eyes streaming through this Church! I am well aware, that I come here quite unprovided with the hammers, that would be necessary for splitting in two all the money, which many here have so unjustly appropriated to their own advantage. But what does this matter? It would be quite enough, were I to get near them, and merely to give a quiet gentle squeeze to those exquisite shawls, which they have on their backs, those fine lawns, those expensive brocades. Oh, what living blood! what living blood would one see oozing from those suits of livery, worn out, before they are paid for! Pass we on to give a squeeze to those ornamental hangings—Behold blood! Pass we on to give a squeeze to those tapestries—Behold blood! Pass we on to squeeze, or rather to perforate, those costly articles of furniture, those bedsteads, those coverlets, those extremely beautiful chairs, covered with velvet—scarlet too! Ay, would to God, that they also might not stream with blood, showing us thereby that the superior grain, with which they are dyed, chiefly comes from the veins of the poor! True indeed it is, that murder and the wrongful defrauding of wages are two sins, so much alike, which so nearly fraternize with each other, that it is difficult to distinguish between them. This fact is expressly asserted by the Preacher; "He, that sheddeth blood, and he, that defraudeth the labourer of his hire, are brothers." (xxxiv. 22, Vulg.) But I am a poor sinner, and therefore doubtless have no power to effect such mighty miracles before your eyes, in order to awaken your pity. Yet I can fancy I behold these poor wretches, in their ignorance whither to go, to whom else to appeal, coming with their bare bleeding wounds into the presence of God. And, if driven to desperation they should once implore justice at His hands, don't you believe that they will obtain it?

13. *Behold the hire of the labourers, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth.* Such is S. James' denunciation of the ungodly rich; *and the cries of them have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.* But what is the import of this title, my hearers, *the Lord of Sabaoth?* It is, that He is the Lord of

the Angels, of the savage beasts, of the thunders, of the hail-storms, of the earthquakes, of the whirlwinds, of the floods, of the sicknesses, of the deaths, and, in a word, the LORD of Armies—*The God of Hosts;* and to teach us, that, at the *cry* of these weeping labourers, all the arsenals in Heaven open wide, leaving them to select which instrument they please, whether defensive or offensive, to redress the heavy wrongs they have received. And can this be doubted? If GOD was ever called upon to make Himself known, as being a most mighty Commander of armies, when was it? It was at the time, when He fought against the Egyptians. Against them it was, that He mustered into the field almost every implement of war—lightnings, thunders, arrows, darkness, flies, frogs, locusts, plagues, shipwrecks. But, in favour of whom did He call forth this huge this formidable armament? Why, He did it for labouring men, who were deprived of their hire. For a length of time the Egyptians had availed themselves of the sinews of the Hebrews, whom they compelled to build their two famous cities; and not only had they never once paid them their wages, but they had even forced them to be at no small expense in finding their own straw, stones, and like building materials. This was the injustice, which in the end so highly incensed GOD against them. For, on hearing the cries of the oppressed, rising from their extreme degradation, what was the first thing He did? He ordered them to adroitly compensate themselves for their just claims, by carrying away with them all such articles of value, as they could borrow from the Egyptians, as in lieu of the debt. He destroyed their cattle, He stripped their vines, He laid waste their enclosures, He levelled their forests, He slew their first-born, and, at last, driving them in their head-long fury into the midst of the sea, He there drowned them all; thus providing the Israelites with a still larger compensation from the vast spoils and pillage of the dead. And suppose not, my hearers, that these are merely my fanciful comments on this history. Read in the Book of Wisdom, where these prodigies, wrought by GOD, in behalf of His people, are enumerated; "He brought them through the Red sea, and led them through much water, but drowned their enemies, and cast them up

out of the bottom of the deep"—and, in connection with this —"He rendered to the righteous a reward of their labours," (x. 18, 19, 17); that is, as the famous commentator Liranus observes, He gave the workmen their hire; He indemnified the labourer for his losses; in a word, He paid the Israelites that just hire, which the Egyptians had kept back by fraud.

How is it then, since the cries of the oppressed hireling have so much power with GOD, that they do not make you afraid? Be assured, these acts of restitution are matters of the highest importance; their obligation is neither to be evaded, nor deferred, being demanded of us by such imposing authority. What more then are you waiting for? Are you purposing to make retribution, when you come to die? Well, well; go on with such a purpose; go on, I say; for, in order to relieve speedily the wants of your suffering creditors, GOD may peradventure bring you to the grave much sooner, than you wish. Doubt not my words: perhaps, even while I am speaking, the warrant to take away your life is already issued out from the Court of Divine justice; already perhaps a troop of sorrows, diseases, terrors, and frenzies have received their commission to carry into effect the fatal mandate. And would you longer delay?

14. Ah, surely it is time, once for all, to repent and to cut off every vain excuse for procrastination. Why so many evasions? Why so many subterfuges? You have your reply ready. I know it quite well. Every one says, if he has not yet paid, it is only because he cannot yet do it. But what, in most cases, prevents him? Nothing, but his own want of will. *They have taught their tongues to speak lies.* (Jer. ix. 5.) Among those few persons, whom GOD, according to Ecclesiasticus, is said to abominate most, is "the rich man, that is a liar;" that rich man, if we are to believe S. Augustine, who, to avoid paying his suffering creditors, is continually using frivolous pretexts, for ever saying; "I cannot." False, false! "He can, in what he wishes; and, when he has no wish, he cannot." When the question is about feasting and giving dinners, Oh, then he can; when it is about paying his due to a religious charity, he cannot. When the question is about operas, singers, and actors, Oh, then he can; when it

is about making some offering to the Church, he cannot. When the question is about dogs and horses, hunting, and such like amusements, however expensive, Oh, then he can; when it is about paying servants their wages, however far back in arrear, he cannot. Yes, "he can, in what he wishes, and, when he has no wish, he cannot." My dear hearers, the LORD deliver you from this class of men, that are "rich liars," these "rich men, that are liars!" Oh, what an abomination are they unto GOD! And therefore I shall not confine myself to simply asking you to relieve these numerous poor sufferers by at once paying them what is already theirs; I shall beg you to give them, in addition, something, that is your own; that you may hereby imitate those lands long fallow, which make up for the loss, incurred through their sluggishness, by the abundance of their after-produce. At all events, I will say with the most learned Cassiodorus, "Let us be ashamed to take from those, to whom we are commanded to give." How would you have these unhappy wretches proceed with you? Are they to dispense with your paying them their due? Are they to surrender to you their rights? Or, are they to be, at least, passive, so long as you like to keep them waiting? But consider; if to you, who are in such far easier circumstances, it seems something very hard to restore what belongs to another, how much harder must they find it not to obtain their own? Only for a moment put yourself, as we say, in their shoes; only reflect, how you would act under the same difficulty. If you were the poor man, would you not demand your own of the rich, just as now, being the rich man, you rob the poor of his own?

But Heaven forbid my ever wishing to forebode, as a punishment, your being reduced to any such strait! Seek rather so to enjoy your property, with GOD's Blessing upon it, that no poor persons, having a just cause to complain of your ill-treatment, may ever dispute it with you. May you live in greater comfort, in greater affluence, and in a more flourishing state altogether! It is your privilege. GOD has assigned you this far happier lot. Thank Him for it. But far be from you the wish to see this accomplished, by means of reducing other people to starvation. For Cassiodorus, the same wise

person, I have just been commending, gave it, as his opinion, that "to desire to be made rich by the exigencies of the poor man is, of all cruelties, the greatest."[1]

[1] This sermon furnishes an admirable corrective of the licentious casuistry, by which certain Jesuits, of the Spanish and Flemish school more particularly, "made the Commandment of GOD of none effect," concerning the obligation, nature, and extent of Christian charity, in the giving of alms. The reader is requested to refer to the *Provinciales* of *Pascal* (*Lettres* vi. ix. xii.), and to compare what he there reads with the statements, made in this Sermon; bearing in mind that Segneri was of the same religious order with Vasquez, Diana, and Escobar; and that, according to the principles of that order, any book, printed by a member, with the approbation of his superiors, possessed the authority of the whole Society, thereby rendered responsible for it. We can almost fancy Segneri here saying within himself; *Liberavi animam meam:* and so, in other parts of his *Quaresimale* (even of this present series), in which he fully and faithfully explains the true Scriptural doctrine, respecting usury, restitution, revenge, duelling, and like practical matters, as it had been, more or less, corrupted and misrepresented, for secular ends, by his own brethren, men of the same Church and order with himself, but not, it is to be feared, of his heavenly mind and conversation.

SERMON XXIII.

ON THE PROFANATION OF THE HOUSE OF GOD.

S. John ii. 15.

"And when He had made a scourge of small cords, He drove them all out of the Temple."

1. Who will deny, that the crime, which a Prince thinks fit, in the exercise of his justice, to punish with his own hand, must be one of exceeding atrocity? We know very well that God drove our two first parents out of that most delightful garden, where He had placed them; but for this purpose He employed an Angel, sending him there, as His immediate agent, to carry into effect, not without force and terms of reproach, the sentence of banishment. He chased the Canaanites from their possessions; but for this purpose He employed an army of hornets. He chased the Amorites from their country; but for this purpose He employed a regiment of flies. No where in Scripture do we read, that our Lord, either before or after His Incarnation, ever came to punish the wicked with His own hands, save only for their disrespect, shown towards His Temple. By the hand of an Angel He smote the families of Egypt. By the hand of an Angel He smote the army of the Assyrians. Herod himself, that proud aspirant to honours no less than Divine, was, I allow, smitten of God; but then it was by the hand of an Angel. It is only, when the profaners of Holy places are to be punished, that I see Christ, otherwise so meek, so gentle, so indulgent, coming forward to apply the rod with His own hand. Oh, how very atrocious must this wickedness therefore be! Oh,

how monstrous! Oh, how intolerable! And, this being the case, what, my dear Pisa, is to become of thee? Art thou then to share with Jerusalem in her punishment? No; unless thou share in her guilt. But thy Churches—what kind of places really are they? Are they in thee, as in other cities, the common haunts of gossiping and of licentiousness? I cannot believe it. On the contrary, as far as my observation extends, ignorant, as I am, of what is going on among thy people out of doors, here, at least, thou seemest to be invariably penitent. Here thou art modest in thy looks; here thou art sober in thy apparel; here thou art reverent in thy posture; here thou art sanctified in thy demeanour; so that, if everywhere else thou art the same, as thou art here, (and what should prevent it?) this appalling example, given us by CHRIST, in the Gospel for to-day, is not directed against thee; this example, I say, of His going in person to carry the whirlwind of His indignation against a people, whom He discerns from the rest, as being the profane despisers of His Church and Worship. Still, not one among us is so perfect in holiness, as to be beyond the reach, not only of stumbling, but even falling away. And therefore, rather to obviate a possibility, than to remedy an existing evil, I propose, my hearers, to show you this morning the grievousness of the wrong those people inflict upon GOD, when, differing in their practices most widely from yourselves, they go to Church, in order to profane, rather than to show it any respect. Hereby you will be encouraged to persevere in your present good conduct; and you will see the reason CHRIST had to chastise with so much severity, even with His own hands, persons, who were guilty of such insolence towards Him.

2. Now tell me, my hearers, how can it be otherwise, than that GOD should feel incensed at a people, who refuse to show Him those marks of respect in Churches, which it is their duty to show Him everywhere? We must by no means regard Him, as if He were not present in all places, just as He is in our Churches. No, Sirs; *The whole earth is full of His glory* (Isa. vi. 3). He is equally present both in the streets, and in the houses, and in the fields, and in every other locality, whether Sacred or profane, whether distin-

guished, or of no repute. Hence it was that Heraclitus, although a Gentile, made a joke of certain fastidious lordlings, when they felt ashamed to speak to him, because they saw him seated in the smoky hovel of a common bakehouse. With a pleasant smile on his countenance, "Come in," he said, "come in: for in this place also GOD is present." He ordered them to come in without hesitation, as Aristotle tells the story; for "here also," he added, "the immortal gods have their abode." But, true as this undoubtedly is, still, GOD has not obliged us to recognise His Presence in all places with an equal degree of respect: since such an obligation, if not quite impracticable, would at least be irksome, owing to the multiplicity of business, the variety of occupation, and the distraction of thought, to which human life is subject. It suffices then, if in every place we abstain from offending Him. It is not necessary, that in every place we should apply ourselves to render Him the same honour; as did that most devout Monarch, who, wherever he was, stirred up his soul to GOD's praises; *Bless the Lord, O my soul, in all places of His dominions* (Ps. ciii. 22, Vulg.) How is it then? Why, He, who has not secured to Himself these positive tokens of our respect in every place, has required them of us in some; and these some are His Churches, in which He accordingly ever represents Himself to us, as fixing His abode. *I have chosen this place to Myself, for a house* (2 Chron. vii. 12): not as if He were not in other places, as well; but because it is in His Church, that every soul is bound to recognise Him. And then, the more to facilitate His worship to us in this place, what has He done? First, He has required, that these houses, being His palaces, wherein He resides, should be made suitably magnificent and beautiful; so that, influenced, as we creatures are, by the senses and by external impressions, we may by such contemplations be led to infer from the stateliness of the room the greatness of the Personage, who there dwells; and thus be more easily induced to testify our respect towards Him. Besides this, to make sure of our more loving and more frequent attendance, He has told us, that it is here He has a particular delight in listening to our supplications, that it is here He pours out

His favours upon us with overflowing liberality. He has called Churches places of reconciliation and of peace, and has allowed them, even by human laws, to enjoy special privileges of exemption, of impunity, of refuge, of shelter, and like prerogatives, to the furtherance of His own glory; *I will glorify the house of My glory* (Isa. lx. 7). All, that I have advanced in this matter, is perfectly true, and is exactly what learned Doctors teach, especially T. Aquinas in his Sum. This then being granted, let us, if you please, argue thus. If from among all the places, which He fills with His immensity, GOD has only selected some few of their number for His particular worship, and has left all the remainder at our disposal, is it not something exceedingly mean on our part, not to be willing, even in those few places, to show Him respect? How many other portions of the world has He freely surrendered to us, where we are at liberty to transact our business, to talk, to laugh, to sport, to amuse ourselves! Shall we then have no pity on His Churches? This was the very thing, which provoked the Apostle to cry aloud against the Corinthians; *What? Have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? Or, despise ye the Church of God?* (1 Cor. ix. 22.) As if he were addressing all of us in their persons; O ye disorderly Christians, what presumption is this! If you wish for amusements, have you not your casinos? If you wish for the gossiping news of the day, have you not your clubs? If you wish for plenty of people to talk to, are there not the streets? If you wish to consult on business, is there not the exchange? *What! have ye not houses? Or, despise ye the Church of God?* This surely, says the Apostle, betrays in you a mind, that is callous, unfeeling, ungrateful, when thus, as if dissatisfied with the many localities GOD has placed at your disposal, you must needs usurp for your own use the small space, which He has reserved for His own honour.

3. And then His sense of the wrong we do Him must necessarily become more painful by the force of contrast. We all know how often in the Holy Scriptures He declares Himself to be *a jealous God*, one, who is strongly inclined to avenge Himself of every rival daring enough to confront him; *The Lord thy God is a jealous God among you;* thus was He

described in Deuteronomy (vi. 15). *He is a jealous God;* thus was He named by Joshua (xxiv. 19). *God is jealous;* thus was He called by Nahum (i. 2). What then would you have Him say, when He comes to contrast the homage, which many Gentiles render to a false devil, with the homage which some Christians pay Him, who is the true GOD? Well does He remember—if such language be applicable to a Being, in respect of whom there is no such thing as the past, but every thing is present, who is, as the Preacher admirably observes, "The Beholder of all ages," (Ecclus. xxxvi. 19, Vulg.)—well does He remember, I say, the extreme devotion, exhibited by these same Gentiles in their temples. The testimony Seneca bare them stands recorded to their everlasting praise. "We enter our temples," said he, "with composure of mind; when approaching the altar, we cast our eyes on the ground; we fold the *toga* around us, we express all possible decency in our demeanour." And did not GOD behold how the ancient Germans never once entered the groves, consecrated to their idols, unless being girded about with close bandages, or with heavy chains, so as to indicate the vast obligation, or the entire submission they owed them? So Tacitus writes of them. Did He not behold, how the ancient Saracens never once ventured to tread the pavement of the temples, dedicated to their deities, unless having their feet and legs bare, so as to denote the special purity or the utter self-abasement, with which they addressed them? So Liranus declares of them. Did He not behold how the ancient Greeks never dared, while present at the sacrifices, offered to their images, either to spit, or blow their noses, that they might not disturb the universal attention and the solemn silence, which was then observed? So Arrian tells the story. And, if GOD beheld all this, and now compares their method of reverence with ours, how will His zeal, His indignation, and His wrath, my brethren, be inflamed against us, if He be indeed *The Lord the jealous God* He claims to be! Think you, says S. Ambrose, that He must not deem it a mighty affront offered Him, when "the Sacraments are administered in the midst of a confusion of voices, while the Gentiles shewed their respect for their idols by their silence?"

An enormity, like this, is quite enough to make Him envy a Jupiter, a Saturn, an Isis, an Osiris; inasmuch as their worshippers acted far more decorously, when they slaughtered a sheep, or a bull, to these false deities, than we do, when we offer, in commemoration, the Sacrifice of His own Son.

4. Consider, moreover, that God is far from exacting from us that same rigid and very minute observance, which the above mentioned Gentiles practised in their temples. He does not insist upon it, that, when in His house, we should tear our tongues out of our jaws, nor our eyes out of our foreheads, as the poor deluded Mahometans are to this day wont to do yonder at their Mecca. But how then can we possibly employ our tongues in such wanton conversation? How then can we permit our eyes to glance about, not only so freely, but so lasciviously? Is He carrying matters too far, when He prohibits with an extraordinary severity those signs, those kissings of the hand, those passwords, those titters, within these walls, which would be discreditable even anywhere else? And then, if He finds Himself unable to procure even so little, as this, from us here, what can He hope for in any other locality? Will people respect Him in the public thoroughfare, who honour Him so little in the midst of His Sanctuary? Here indeed they have before their eyes many examples of seriousness, of gravity, of godly contrition. One person is lamenting his sins, and another is confessing them. One person is administering the Sacrament, and another is receiving it. Some are joining in the Liturgy; some are singing Psalms; some are giving at the Offertory; some are expressing deep humiliation; and some, holy joy. And, if any one, with these examples before his eyes, can still remain quite unmoved, or is seen laughing, while they are in tears, and actually sinning, while they are praying, what judgment can we pronounce on such a character? I would decide the point in the words of S. Chrysostom; "If, when taking our place within the Church, we are guilty of so great a sin, what are we likely to become, when we go forth into the world? We suffer such turbulent waves in the harbour; how then will it go with us, when we enter upon that ocean of evil; I mean, worldly business and

domestic cares?" If a man cannot bring himself to spend a short time in prayer, even in a Church, where he has so many to encourage him, will he pray at home, where he has so many to distract him? Will he manage to collect his thoughts in a turmoil, if he cannot do so within the walls of a Church? Will he refrain from evil speaking at his club, who does not refrain in a Church? Will he restrain himself from coquetting at parties, if he does not restrain himself in a Church? With what kind of modesty, pray, will he sit down to hear a comedy, who has attended a Sermon with such marked indifference? If he has no fear of betraying irreverence in places, where he hears it reproved, what will he do, where he may hear it commended? If he designs some evil, when in sight of one, who reproves him for it, what will he do, where he may hear it made a matter of boasting? If, in a word, he can go so far, as to offend God, where others are honouring Him, what will he do, where others are insulting Him? Ah! we must surely conclude, that the man, who can so easily fail in his duty to God in a Church, furnishes an undoubted proof against himself, that out of a Church he would shew Him no manner of courtesy, respect, or devotion whatever. Our faith teaches him, that *God is in His Holy Temple* (Hab. ii. 20): why does he not then mind what follows? We must observe the strictest silence in His presence. *Let all the earth keep silence before Him.* It teaches him, that God is presiding, as on His Throne: why then does he not revere Him, as the Lord, who beareth the sceptre in His hand? It teaches him, that God is sitting here, as on His Tribunal; why then does he not fear Him, as the Judge, who, laying aside His sceptre, may unsheath His sword? For all these reasons, my hearers, do you not acknowledge, that God will conceive a particular aversion for persons, who so little honour, who rather so highly dishonour Him, in our Churches? And, should His wrath be thus kindled, whither shall we betake ourselves to implore His forgiveness? What possible defence have we against His judgments?

5. We shall find, on carefully considering the matter, that God has not designed Churches so much for His own glory, as for our benefit. His greatness surely is not at all aug-

mented by those cupolas refulgent with gold, nor by those towering piles of marble, nor by those altars enriched with silver, nor by those candelabras dazzling with light: not one of them adds the least to His Majesty. Without any temples, without any altars, He would not be a jot less Blessed, than He was from all Eternity, when He had no world and none to worship Him. The Apostle thus speaks to the point, addressing the Athenians; *God, who made all things, dwelleth not in temples made with hands, neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed anything* (Acts xvii. 24). The utmost He has contemplated is, that He may have upon the earth some one place, which may incline Him, on His looking towards it, to pity mankind: for, seeing how much He is affronted by them in so many other places, He would fain, by turning His attention from thence to their Churches, take occasion to relent, to be pacified, and to suspend the well merited castigation. Solomon distinctly adverted to this at the famous consecration of the Temple; *Now Mine eyes shall be open, and Mine ears attent unto the prayer, that is made in this place. I will hear and forgive their sin* (2 Chron. vii. 15, 16). Now, if God on looking towards the Churches, instead of finding in them any occasion to relent, has cause rather to take offence, where is it, that we can hope for mercy? Where else must He look for some inducement to stay His avenging hand? Help Him a little with your advice, my brethren. To what other places must He look? Shall He look towards the streets, where profligacy is so rampant? Or shall He look towards the piazzas, where idle talk is so fashionable? If He direct His eyes towards the noblemen's palaces, will He not see the poor left to starve in the court-yard, that more horses may be fed in the stables? In the shops of the mechanics, He will see lodged falsehood and imposition; in the cottages of the poor, discontent and envy; in the huts of the peasant, violence and rudeness. Does He turn to the courts of Law? And how much spitefulness will He see in the prosecutions, or chicanery in the pleading, or quibbling in the defence, or personal hatred in the sentence! He will see lawsuits protracted for the purpose of filching more money out of men's pockets; the poor man, who has nothing, put back; the man,

who brings his fee, put forward; one, who promises a bribe, favoured; one, who can inspire fear, obliged. If He turn to the banks, the exchanges of money, where is there more barefaced usury? If to the chambers, where contracts are signed, where is there more extensive trickery? If to the custom house, where dues are exacted, where is there more shameful extortion? He cannot gaze upon the Royal Palaces without noticing, how in the saloons, most open to view, gambling and idleness constitute the very life of the attendants; how in the chambers further on, calumny and evil speaking parade up and down with the courtiers; how, in the state-apartments, insolence and haughtiness take their seat with the grandees. He will discover rancour there in the heart, simulation in the face; suavity there in the speech, venom in the motive; candour there set at nought, and cunning had in honour; innocence there entrapped, and wickedness had in fear; interest there promoted, and merit depressed. But woe unto us, should He look down upon our theatres, where the stories are so indecent, and the representations so revolting! Woe unto us, if He turn His eye to our towns, where the revelry is so common, and the drunkenness so habitual! Let Him gaze upon the sea; and will He not see piracy, there sailing on the swiftest galleys? Let Him survey the forests; and will He not see assassination, there lurking in the stillest gloom? Let Him turn to the fields; will He not see gallantry, there disporting on the loveliest verdures? Wheresoever He looks—Ah, Sirs, wheresoever He looks—He must feel His anger kindling more and more hot within Him, and His lightnings more and more ready to burst out of His hands. So great is the wickedness now universally rampant among us, that we may well conclude with Hosea; *There is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land* (Hos. iv. 1, 2): yea, more; *By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out.* Oh, what impurities now spread, like a deluge, on every side! Oh, the stench! Oh, the offensiveness! One word sums up all. *Blood toucheth blood;* incest is committed, and there is no fear! But what, my hearers, if, in addition to all this, God, on His looking at our very Churches, should become still

more infuriated? How can He pardon us? *How can He be propitious to us?* (Jer. v. 7, Vulg.) What other place will gain us pity? What other roof will afford us shelter?

Behold in this, my brethren, the true cause of those calamities, which are now converting our most flourishing cities into a ruinous heap. It is *the vengeance of the Lord upon her,* (l. 15,) I will declare with Jeremiah. Do you observe, how wars of so long standing yet continue to rage? *It is the vengeance of the Lord.* Do you observe how plagues of so great frequency still return? *It is the vengeance of the Lord.* Do you observe how earthquakes of so terrible a kind yet convulse the earth? *It is the vengeance of the Lord;* His vengeance, *because of His Temple.* There is no need of our searching for any other causes, why we are so afflicted. Here, exclaims S. Chrysostom, is the chief cause of all our calamities. Churches having been built to render GOD propitious, not even here, where we ought to assuage His wrath, do we cease from giving Him offence. "Hence it is, that everything goes wrong with us; hence the loss of all things; because at the very time, when, beyond every other, GOD was to be rendered favourable, we depart from His Presence under His more heavy displeasure." And is it possible for us to shut our eyes to such an obvious truth? Did we keep ourselves from sinning elsewhere, and consequently were not obliged to repair in one place the wrongs, we do unto Him in another, our blindness might have some colourable excuse; but, while we are sinning everywhere to such a degree, that *the earth is become corrupt before God,* (Gen. vi. 2,) is it not more than imprudence, is it not rather madness, is it not extreme folly and stupidity to behave in our Churches, as people now do, with such unbounded effrontery?

6. Ah! surely, such was not the demeanour, our forefathers observed, when they would obtain GOD's favour. Well did our Christian brethren know, in former times, that the chief object, for which Churches were built, was that people might frequent them, in order to quench with their tears that Divine anger, which they had elsewhere provoked by their sins. What, therefore, was the manner of their appearance at Church? They came, some clad in mourning and

covered with ashes; others, clothed in sackcloth and girded about with cords. Lowly and reverently did they cast themselves before the Priest, bathing his feet with their tears, and saluting him with their kisses; nor did they leave one single act of deference omitted, whereby they could express the sorrow they felt for their offences, or the longing desire they had for pardon. Nor was it the common people only, who did this; but crowned Potentates, especially at such times, when the particular nature of their misdeeds prompted them to undo the mischief, they had created in public, by a like publicity in their repentance. An Emperor Theodosius was seen to enter the Basilica of Milan in mean apparel. Scarcely had he passed the vestibule, when he prostrated himself not only on both his knees, but with his face, upon the ground; and in this posture remained a considerable time, repeating with broken sobs and sighs that verse of David, *My soul cleaveth to the earth; quicken Thou me, O Lord, according to Thy Word.* (Ps. cxix. 25.) Then indignantly striking his face and rending with his own hands, in the presence of all, even the hair from his head, he bathed the pavement with his tears; and, while the elements were being consecrated, stood bowed down in the midst of the populace, instead of mounting his throne in the midst of his courtiers. What shall I say to you of Lewis I., and of Henry II., King of England? The former covering his bare limbs with a rough hair-cloth, as the latter did his with a rugged quilt, they both entered their Churches; one, the Church of Aix-la-Chapelle, the other, that of Canterbury. The first standing upright behind the door, and the latter prostrated on his knees at the foot of the altar—they asked forgiveness at the hands of all the people, who came there to worship. And, in addition to this, Henry, baring his Royal shoulders in the view of the congregation, besought, of his own accord, that upwards of eighty monks, who were there, should, each of them, inflict on him two stripes. But the example, set by Sweyn King of Denmark, was something yet more remarkable. This man had by an over-hasty sentence put to death some of his principal subjects, because they had complained among themselves of the government they were under, as people everywhere

are wont to do. When William, the most Reverend Archbishop of Roschild, became acquainted with this, he deeply resented it. For a time he dissembled his indignation; but he could restrain it no longer. Shortly after he had to celebrate the Holy Communion; during which he saw the King drawing near to join in the Service, arrayed in the most splendid apparel, and with a brilliant Court-retinue. At such a sight he was deeply moved, and, stepping forward to meet him, he repelled him with his Crosier. "How darest thou, murderous King," he said, "enter a Church? If thou art hardened in thy wickedness, this is no place for obstinate sinners. If thou art humbled for thy sin, this is not a dress for a contrite penitent. Therefore depart hence; for come in any manner, that pleases thee, thou art not worthy to be here." On this unlooked-for reception, how think you did Sweyn behave? Not a single expression of complaint, nor yet of anger, nor yet of self-defence escaped him; but content with a simple inclination of his head he returned to his palace. There he laid aside his Royal apparel; and then retraced his steps, meanly clothed, with his head exposed, with his feet bare, and, in that state, he presented himself on his bended knees before the doors of the same Church. In the meantime, the Archbishop had just reached, in the order of the Communion, the close of the *Gloria in Excelsis*, when, being apprized of the King's return, he bade the singers stop, and at once proceeded to the door, where Sweyn with the bitterest tears was imploring the forgiveness of his sins. At such a spectacle and at such a prayer the Archbishop's heart relented. He folded the illustrious penitent in his embrace; and, taking the right side of him in advance, conducted him into the Church. There Sweyn, having from an elevated platform commanded the herald to proclaim silence, made confession of his fault with a loud voice in the presence of the whole congregation; and, commending the remarkable forbearance of the Archbishop in restoring him to the Communion of the Church, gave to that same Cathedral, as a thankoffering—(what think you—a handsome chalice?)—He gave it one-half of a province, known by the name of Stefnica.

7. O example, to be enshrined for ever in the remembrance of all ages! But you imagine possibly, that I am about to propose it this morning for your imitation. No, Sirs; most certainly I am not. I assure you I shall make no such high demand upon you. Piety, like this, no more exists among the faithful: such zeal for GOD is utterly gone. Therefore, don't be alarmed, as if I was expecting anything of the sort from you. Still, I cannot but insist upon this. If, in our attendance at Church, when we go there to implore the Divine mercy, we cannot bring ourselves to copy after the example, given us by these illustrious persons, why don't we, at least, contrive to make some amends for our short-comings by the composure of our looks, by the disposition of our hands, by the restraint of our tongues, and by the modesty of our demeanour? Let our cavaliers still be allowed to wear within these walls the cross on the breast and the sword by their girdle; nor let it be expected of them, that they should imitate the piety of the Emperor Theodosius, who always, before he entered a Church, removed the crown from his head, and the weapons of war from his side: but why should they not at least bend both knees in prayer with a devotion, due to the ALMIGHTY, not partial but entire; not as in scorn, but from the heart? Again, let our ladies still be allowed to bring here with them the ornaments on their necks and the rings in their ears; nor let it be expected of them, that they should imitate the humility of S. Agnes Augusta, who never visited any Church, except in a dress of plain linen and common serge: but why should they not at least cover their shoulders with the modesty, befitting the many Angels, who are there present; *on account of the Angels* (1 Cor. xi. 10); whether we are to understand by this expression those, who are really Angels by nature; or those, who resemble Angels, either by the purity of a holy life, or by the dignity of a Priestly office? Can any person be excused, who refuses even to comply with terms so easy, as these? Has he any reason, has he any right to refuse? Can he allege in his defence any one sufficient pretext? *Behold, it is laid over with gold and silver* (Hab. ii. 19). This may be truly said of many, whom we observe in this place on our

Festival-days; *Behold, it is laid over with silver and gold; and there is no spirit at all in it,* save only the spirit of ostentation; for, certainly, we cannot discern in them any signs of the spirit of prayer, nor of the spirit of wisdom, nor of the spirit of godly fear.

What then would those eminent Saints, the recent subjects of our praise, what language would they be likely to use, should they happen in these days to re-visit our Churches, and to see people, so vastly their inferiors, making their appearance in them after this idle unmeaning fashion? "Are these, they would ask, the customs of a praying people? Do they come in such a manner, after their many outrages against the ALMIGHTY, to make their peace with Him? Is it thus, that they express their detestation of sin? Is it thus, that they supplicate His forgiveness?" 'No,' they would say in the language of S. Cyprian, the despisers of GOD can in no wise be His proper worshippers; they cannot offer Him any service of a nature to assuage His wrath, nor can they thus recover His lost favour. It is not possible, that they have ever considered seriously the end, which renders it their duty to go to Church and to remain there. It is true, they listen to the Service, but it is from habit; they kneel at the Prayers, but their hearts are unmoved; they join in the Confession, but they don't feel how it affects them; they consider not, poor creatures, they consider not what they do." To this effect would these excellent men deliver their minds. I feel quite certain that they would use some such terms of reproof. For, in my opinion, all the abuses, which people are guilty of at Church, may be referred to the single fact, that so very few go and remain there with any deliberate intention of pacifying GOD. Many go out of curiosity, many for want of something else to do, many from force of habit; but very few, with the leading object to obtain the pardon of their sins. If they attend the Vespers, they go to gratify the ear with the sweetness of the music; they don't go to elevate the mind with the spirituality of its intention. If they attend the Sermon, they go to feast their intellects with the beauties of rhetoric; they don't go to inform the conscience with the instructions of wisdom. If they attend the processions and

the ceremonies on Festival-days, they go for the sake of sight-seeing, or for the mere satisfaction of curiosity, and not from any wish to have their devotions excited, and their souls edified, by such observances. Now, if we pay no serious regard to the principal end, to be set before us in going to Church, is it at all surprising, that we should remain there in the spirit of the world, rather than of GOD? I said the principal end; because we are not absolutely prohibited to feel any pleasure in these fascinating Services of the Church, I have just mentioned. No, Sirs; there is no such prohibition. But why should we, never once all the time, bestow a single thought upon GOD, just as if our main object in frequenting them were only to please ourselves, and not to do Him any honour?

And can we, after this, believe that GOD at all regards these Services—that He finds any delight and satisfaction in them? Quite the reverse. Alas! what fears do I entertain, lest He may soon have to address us in the very same words He once used, by the mouth of Malachi, against the profaners of His Festivals in former times; *Behold, I will spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts* (ii. 3). Oh, what language, my hearers, what language is this! Could you ever have supposed it, had not GOD with His own mouth thus plainly spoken? You celebrate your feasts, says the LORD; you get up your concerts, your decorations, your fine displays. Keep them to yourselves. They are all *yours,* so long as your business, while here, is but to gossip, to chatter, and to titter, as though you were at some public theatre. Feasts, such as these, *I will spread upon your faces,* like the vilest *dung.* Bear well in mind the expression —*I will spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts.* These solemn feasts are not Mine; they are *your* feasts; *yours,* I say, so long as you observe them not for My sake, but for yourselves; coming here for conversation, coming here for entertainment, coming here for diversion, coming here, as if you would turn My House into an assembly room. I fear that in terms, such as these, GOD will soon have to address you in His heavy indignation: it may indeed be, that He has done so already.

8. Would to God, however, that some persons would satisfy themselves with going to Church, merely to divert their thoughts! The dreadful thing is, that many come here with the express design of committing sin; and, what is even worse, to make others commit sin. To make others commit sin? Yes, yes, I say; to make others commit sin. Many Christians go now to Church to make others commit sin! Why, is it not clearly evident, that all our Churches now-a-days serve, as so many stations, where unprincipled men may ensnare with greater safety the virtue of other people. Here, here it is, that with bolder audacity they can lay their snares, that others may get entangled. Here, here it is, that they can with closer secresy set their traps, that others may fall into them. What more shall I say? We are now come to such a pass, as to be able to declare with Jeremiah, *They have set their stumbling blocks in the House which is called by My name to pollute it.* (vii. 30, Vulg.) Oh, what wickedness! Oh, what atrocity! Oh, what insolence! And where then wilt thou shelter thyself to be safe, O innocent virtue, if thou canst not retire even to the House of God without a misgiving? Thou avoidest the windows, to escape the gaze of curious neighbours. Thou avoidest the streets, to escape the rudeness of the hustling crowd. Thou avoidest the theatre to escape the danger of seeing those immodest representations. What does all this avail thee, if, as soon as thou enterest a Church, thou meetest the very dangers, avoided by thee elsewhere, and, for thy greater exposure to ridicule, art brought to suffer shipwreck in the very harbour itself? Woe unto us! For in these days, unless we repair to the catacombs for the discharge of our duty, we shall find it hazardous to join in the public Ordinances of religion, ay, even to approach the most Holy Sacraments. And whence comes it, that, since I bear the name of Paul, I have not the zeal of Paul as well, to reprove, as I ought, such superlative wantonness, and so give some vent to my feelings?

9. Reverence to our holy Churches is a principle, so deeply engraven in the most uncultivated minds, that, during the hostile inroads of the barbarians, Christians found no other place to be so safe an asylum, wherein to lodge their posses-

sions. The city of Rome attested this fact. When Alaric, that fierce barbarian, came with a Gothic sword to make such hideous slaughter, to shed such torrents of blood, to spread such immense havoc, so highly did he venerate the Churches, as places set apart for the Worship of GOD, that he gave the strictest orders that none of his soldiers should be guilty within their walls of any violence whatsoever. Then was it a wondrous thing to see, how the Romans, on becoming acquainted with this prohibition, posted off, as in a race, towards the Churches, instead of locking themselves up in their strong fortifications. Thither were they seen to fly, with all their household goods piled on their shoulders. There did they abide the whole three days, that the siege lasted; there they had their meals; there they slept in safety; and there, with the doors left wide open, they enjoyed a sense of security, such as was in vain sought behind the guarded battlements. In the meanwhile, the maddened barbarians were rushing all over the terrified city; they mastered the heights; they got possession of the defences; they greedily plundered the palaces of the Consuls, and the courts of the Governors; they spared neither the feebleness of the aged in their dwellings, nor the cries of the infants in their cradles, nor the tears of the brides in their closets, nor the entreaties of the sick in their hospitals; everywhere they spread consternation, everywhere death; they filled all the suburbs with shrieks and lamentations, with uproar and confusion. Amidst this stunning turmoil, in the Churches alone was found peace and tranquillity. No sooner did the barbarians in their hot pursuit approach the precincts of the Churches, than they at once turned away their daring steps in another direction; just as the sea, on nearing the shore, instantly withdraws its infuriated waves. S. Augustine has described the scene to the very life; "To that point did the bloody foe extend his animosity; there the whole impetus of his attack was arrested; there his rage for the spoil was broken asunder." All, who got within the Churches, whether men or women, young or old, married or single, Christians or heathens, all of them were alike in safety. Safe were the habiliments, safe the purple robes, safe the gold, safe the jewels; the most costly

vessels, whether for sacred or common use, were all of them safe, as S. Augustine, S. Jerome, Orosius, and other celebrated writers, who lived at the time, bear unanimous testimony.

Indulge me now, my hearers, so far, as to follow me in the inference I shall deduce from these facts. If the respect, we owe to Churches, be so great, that a barbarian could not find it in his conscience to harm even the bodies of the persons, who fled to them for shelter, shall not a Christian feel ashamed to harm them in their souls? Think not, that this contrast is carried too far: it is perfectly true. The loss of the Divine favour is unquestionably a far more severe loss, than that of every other worldly good, whether family, or property, or reputation, or life, or whatsoever you please: for, as S. Augustine expresses it, "It profits a man more to be a just man, than to be simply a man." Now, if a barbarian did not in a Church dare harm a Christian in his body and property—the things belonging to him, as a man—shall we attempt to harm him in his soul and conscience—the things belonging to him, as a just man? Shall we seek to make him lose his integrity, to make him lose Grace, to make him lose Paradise, to make him lose GOD? And with this aim shall any be found among us, capable of using all the soft insinuating methods and artifices of dress and vanity, either more easily to entrap the unwary, or to get a firmer hold upon the victims they have already captured?

But whence comes it, that the very walls of the Church do not resent so detestable an outrage? How is it, that these stones, although dumb, do not speak? How is it, that these paintings, although lifeless, do not cry out? How is it, that the Angels do not, at least, come down in their zeal to exterminate us? Peter Damianus describes the difficulty the Angels have to restrain the vehement anger, that fires their bosoms, when unseen they fill the Church, especially during the Holy Communion, and there behold people committing acts of levity and profaneness in the Presence of that LORD, whom they themselves serve with trembling. "With what indignation," he says, "must they be moved against us, when they see us sitting down with irreverence, and even laughing

and bandying foolish talk in the Presence of Him, before whom they minister with trembling? Now, as this suffices to excite in them so great indignation, how much more may be expected to follow, should they see us attempting to lead others into sin in the Presence of the same LORD, and doing all we can to render these Churches of GOD so many *dens of thieves?* And what sort of *thieves?*—thieves, of the vilest cast in all the earth; thieves, I say, who rob CHRIST of souls. Will they not then consume away in their zeal? Will they not be transported with madness? Will they not burst asunder with indignation?

10. O youth, thou most inconsiderate season of life, that art wont so daringly to conduct thyself in our Churches, doing GOD such wrong, and souls such mischief, wherefore art thou not here present this morning to listen to my sermon? Pause a moment, I implore thee, to reflect on the dreadful damnation, suspended over thy head. Flatter not thyself, that thou wilt escape, because, it may be, for a time GOD dissembles with thee; *The Lord is as a man of war.* (Ex. xv. 3, Vulg.) Well, well, I understand it: He is "*as* a man of war." Now, for a season, 'tis true, He contends with thee under the semblance of a man, and looks, at times, as placing Himself ignobly beneath us: but mark well what follows in the context; *The Omnipotent is His Name.* He will therefore be at no loss, in this Omnipotence, to come upon thee, when thou dost least suspect it. He will be at no loss to bring down such over-bearing insolence. He will be at no loss to subdue such extreme wantonness. What dost thou then? Or, what is thy thought and expectation? Art thou perhaps waiting for the time, when, armed, as formerly, with scourges, so now with lightnings, CHRIST may come here in His wrath to expel thee from this Church, desecrated, as it is, by thy immodest glances, by thy most indecent smiles? Do, as I advise thee. Quickly depart hence, before He come to cast thee out: and never return, never again place thy foot in this Church, unless reformed, until penitent. Dost thou presume to tread this pavement? thou, to be present at this service? thou, to lift up thine eyes to these images; just as if they were not all witnesses of thy youthful profligacy? I

tell thee, that thou art not safe within these walls: for there is no place, be it ever so sacred, which ever afforded a shelter or gave impunity to any one, who dared to profane it. The Empyreal Heaven did not save the Angels, who in that Heaven sinned. The earthly Paradise did not deliver Adam, who in that Paradise sinned. And wilt thou presume upon finding in the Church an exemption from punishment for the evil, which in the Church thou hast perpetrated? *Trust ye not in lying words saying, The Temple of the Lord, The Temple of the Lord; it is the Temple of the Lord,* (Jer. vii. 4, Vulg.): for there are such things, as earthquakes, like those recently at Ragusi and at Rimini,[1] which may roll the Churches headlong over thee, unless thou art quick to leave them. Believe me, this place is not one, suited to thy presence. Let others henceforth come here to bear their part in the different Services; and, if thy mind be still bent on the gratification of thy carnal lusts, do thou, to this end, inquire after some other place, where thou wilt in a less degree provoke the wrath of God by thy iniquities. And don't be surprised at my earnestness in persuading thee not to approach the Church; because, were I now to give the very same advice to other persons, even though great sinners, the words would no sooner escape my lips, than thou wouldest behold those dead bodies of the Saints, that lie buried under these altars, suddenly rising everyone of them from their sepulchres with an outcry against me for having audaciously deprived God of His worshippers. Therefore, since they now all remain silent, it is a proof, that they all approve of what I tell thee. It is a proof, that they have no wish to see thee here: it is a proof, that they cannot endure thy presence in this Church: it is a proof, how they hate and disdain thee; protesting, one and all, that it would give them more pleasure, wert thou to absent thyself altogether from this place, rather than frequent it for such abominable purposes.

Such, for a certainty, would have been the language I should have employed, if I could have seen among my audience this morning that disorderly set of young persons, to whom the Lord seemed to refer in the words of Isaiah; *A*

[1] Refer to Serm. xv. § 3.

people, that provoketh Me to anger continually to My face. (lxv. 3.) But what is the fact? They, who stand in greatest need of my preaching, come not to hear me. Far indeed should I exceed all bounds, O my respected hearers, in dealing out my reproofs against those, who, least of all, deserve them. Still what must be done? It is of the utmost moment to every one among us thoroughly to understand the supreme veneration, which we vile creeping worms of the earth ought to pay to GOD's most Sacred dwelling; it being that House, which demands of us, as its due, not only honour, not only respect, but the utmost possible Sanctification; *Holiness becometh Thine House.* (Ps. xciii. 5.) And therefore, if we allow it to be a secure harbour for thieves, for man-slayers, and for lewd fellows of the baser sort, why shall we not open its doors to innocence, to modesty, to penitence? Or, contrariwise, why shall we oblige those, who are religiously and devoutly disposed, to take their departure from it? Consider now, whether the LORD have not ample cause to punish so intolerable an outrage with His own hand: and so let me have a moment's rest.

THE SECOND PART.

11. I hear some among you, the superiors to their neighbours in point of shrewdness, saying now to me; "Father, what a simpleton you are! Don't you see, how, by preaching such a discourse, as this, you have ruined your own cause? You have driven all the people out of Church. You have; and who is there now left to hear your Sermon? Take our word for it. It far more answers the end of a preacher to shut his eyes a little, and to suffer people in a Church to come, to go, and to behave, while there, as they like."—Really! Oh, Sirs, what a useful hint, you have given me! I am much indebted to you for it. Only, in this case, why were you not early and in time to give the same advice to CHRIST also, who preceded me this morning, in doing precisely the very thing, for which you upbraid me? He went into the Temple, let me tell you, for the purpose of delivering instruction, and to preach His Sermon too, as was the custom

on Feast-days; and, in spite of this, on perceiving how little respect was shown Him by certain persons in a place so Sacred, *He made a scourge of small cords, and drove them all out of the Temple.* And was not this a miserable expedient to resort to, for getting an audience? Excuse me, therefore, if I have taken courage from this circumstance, and have readily followed an example, unfashionable, it is true, but yet one possessing a Divine sanction.

12. But a truce to these playful skirmishes. I firmly believe, my brethren, that you never, as a general practice, come to Church with any set purpose to desecrate it; and, on this account, I have delivered myself with greater freedom, as well knowing where I am, and whom I am addressing. Still, were you ever to be tempted to come here with any such intention, pause, I would say, before you proceed further; for, of a surety, audacity, such as this, could not go long unpunished; unless the Apostle is to be found a liar, who so loudly and so plainly declared, that *If any man defile the Temple of God, him shall God destroy.* (1 Cor. iii. 17.) . . . Oh, how perfectly well, when He wishes it, does He know the way to avenge Himself! And stand we then in no fear and trembling for ourselves, as if He had not the means of chastising us at His disposal?

13. Seriously consider, my hearers, that these same Churches, where you now meet together, are destined, in a more important sense, to be your dwelling-places unto the end of the world. The splendid palaces, where you now live, entertain you but for a season, and a very short season too. No sooner are you dead, than your relations, even the nearest and dearest among them, will turn you out of doors, from a fear of being infected by you. To these Churches you must come at last, for your rest; *Their sepulchres shall be the houses for all generations.* (Ps. xlviii. 12, Vulg.) What rest, however, would God allow you, when dead, to find in them, after you have treated them, while living, with so little reverence? Ah! great is my fear, were we to make a round of the graves in our different Churches, one after another, that we should find in not a few of them the bodies missing; the devils having received permission from God to snatch them from their

sepulchres, as unworthy of a place there, and at once to convey them (a translation deplorable indeed!) to hell, to those gloomy depths in the very centre of the earth, which are no sepulchres truly for repose, but for disquietude, for restlessness, for anguish, for everlasting misery—*a place of torment.* (S. Luke xvi. 28.) And is there a person here, who would expose himself to so great a hazard? I know, Christian brethren, that, when I speak to you in this manner, I may offend many; but I must repeat my former assertion: forgive me for so doing. On a subject of this moment, copying the indignation, expressed by CHRIST, I must apply the scourge. He, who complains, has none to blame, but himself. Be this as it may, who among you would have me flatter him? If the world has vices, I am bound to raise my voice against those vices, whether it pleases people, or not. Otherwise, Oh, my GOD, what will become of me? How shall I dare meet Thee in my last hour? Oh, the dismay! Oh, the horrible dread! Must I not then hear from Thee those very reproofs, which I omitted to sound in the ears of others? *Woe is me, because I have held my peace* (Isa. vi. 5, Vulg.) would then be my piteous cry with Isaiah, who failed, through timidity, to make himself heard. Never therefore, my beloved LORD, may this charge be proved against me, that, from some base unworthy motive, I at any time betrayed Thy cause. From the very first day of my preaching, have I told Thee as much. I ask not applause, I ask not favour from man; I ask to please none, but Thee.

SERMON XXIV.

ON THE SINNER'S QUIET CONSCIENCE.

S. John vii. 24.

"Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment."

1. The deception, practised by bird-catchers, is one of a most malicious kind. Having caught any particular bird they may fancy, though, it is true, they confine it in a cage, to prevent its escaping, yet, the charges they are at for its maintenance, when there, are scarcely to be credited; and so are the pains they take, that it should live in comfort, that it should have plenty to eat, plenty to drink, that it should now and then breathe a little pure fresh air, that it should be cheerful, that it should be joyous, that it should sing no less in its prison, than it once did in its liberty. But how are we to explain all this? Are not these sportsmen the very persons, who are continually hunting down poor birds to kill them, whose delight it is to pursue them with their fire-arms and to destroy them? Why then to this particular bird do they show all this amazing affection? Let it not surprise you; for the trick is well understood. They intend to make this bird, while it sings so happily in its cage, the means of decoying other birds into the same snare; under the deluding hope, that a life, spent in a cage, will prove one of uninterrupted pleasure and enjoyment. And in this they frequently succeed; so that for one such silly bird, that they keep alive and merry, numberless are the others, that they unmercifully put to death. Now the device, employed by Satan against sin-

ners, is the exact counterpart of this. His whole study is to get them to believe, that in his hands they will be quite happy, that everything will be done for them, that they will be treated with every possible indulgence; and therefore it should not surprise us, if we find him, when he has secured one of their number and taken every precaution to prevent his escape, allowing that one a certain degree of prosperity, fair credit in the world, and such favour with the people, as the Pharisees enjoyed in their day. But this is the very time, when we should take the excellent advice CHRIST gives us in to-day's Gospel, where He cautions us not to judge from the surface. *Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.* Don't allow yourself to be imposed upon by the degree of frankness, by the calm exterior, which some sinner may have. It is false; it is deceptive; it is *according to appearance:* nor in such characters can the heart ever be in unison with the countenance. Do you believe that the Pharisees, whom S. John describes to us this morning in such vivid language, were in their hearts what they looked in their faces? Externally they were all openness, they were all sincerity, they were all assurance; but within they were a constant prey to their own wicked bad feelings. Who, tell me, has taught you to give such instant credit to the devil, when he promises, if you will only come into his snare, that he will make you happy? It is false; it is false. Scorn his insinuations; laugh at those lures, by which he would betray you. For my part, I am inclined to show just the contrary; that, even had we no other restraint left us to keep us far aloof from sin, this of itself alone ought to be quite enough—to consider how ill it fares with every sinner in his heart. Attend, and you will be convinced.

2. No one can deny that the pains of a woman in childbirth are very severe: but then, when once delivered, she is so delighted to find herself a mother, a mother too of a male child, that she immediately forgets all her sufferings; *She remembereth no more the anguish for joy that a man is born into the world* (S. John xvi. 21.) You must not, however, suppose it to be the same with a soul, when it gives birth to sin. No; it is then quite the reverse. At the time of giving birth, it

certainly does enjoy some degree of pleasure; but the sense of remorse, of anguish, of distress is afterwards so intense, as to banish all the preceding joy. The soul *remembers no more* the *joy*, because of *the anguish*. I lay no claim to the credit of this beautiful thought; it belongs to him, to whom, beyond any other among the Fathers, I stand indebted for any little power I may possess in preaching. It belongs to S. Chrysostom. He says; "A woman's pain before child-birth is severe, but, after she is delivered, it ceases. But it is not so here. For, while we are giving birth to our depraved passions, we feel delight and exultation: no sooner, however, are we delivered of that deadly offspring sin, than, at the sight of its vileness, we suffer a more excruciating pain, than women do in bringing forth." I really believe it would be difficult to find any other truth, concerning which writers, both Christian and heathen, Sacred and profane, are so cordially agreed, as the one before us—that the world has no torment, equal to that of a guilty conscience.

3. Exile certainly is extremely painful; and yet Ovid preferred it to the sufferings of a guilty conscience. Blindness unquestionably is extremely painful; and yet Orestes preferred it to the sufferings of a guilty conscience. Hear what Plautus, comedian too as he was, declared; "Nothing is more wretched, than a soul conscious of guilt." Cicero was of opinion that those Furies, who appeared so hideously on the stage, now armed with torches of blazing sulphur, now with scourges of knotted snakes, were all quite fabulous; but that the place of such Furies was supplied in the heart of every sinner by his own consciousness of guilt; "These are wicked men's daily domestic Furies." And what he wisely conceived to be taught under the figures of the Alectos, the Tisiphones, and the Megæras, he regarded, as being further intended by the vultures, which gnawed the heart of Tityon, and by the eagles, which mangled the entrails of Prometheus. Why need I appeal to Plutarch, Seneca, Plato, those great teachers of morality? Is it not quite clear from their writings, that they did not consider it possible for a man to be ever more severely punished, than he is by his own conscience? "Sin is its own first and greatest punishment."

But, to pass on to Doctors more entitled to our esteem, what did the Prelate S. Gregory write on this subject? Listen attentively. "Among our manifold distresses of mind, and the numberless trials of adversity, there is not one greater, than a sense of guilt." Again, "no punishment so heavy as that of a bad conscience;" so S. Bernard settled the point. Again, "what punishment more acute than the wound of the conscience within?" so S. Ambrose decided it; and so others, over and over again. But why are we to go begging after other authorities, when we have the Scriptures themselves, pourtraying to us in such vivid colouring the wretched state of a sinner; at one time, in an Adam, alarmed at the gentlest whisper of a breeze in Paradise (Gen. iii.); at another, in a Cain, starting at the least stir of a leaf in the forest (Gen. iv.); then, in a Lamech, voluntarily confessing a murder he had secretly committed, although no one accused him of it, nor summoned him before the judge, or was even aware of his crime (Gen. iv. 27)? Poor David! a man, who had once faced with intrepidity the terrible Goliath, a man, who so often with his naked arm had both strangled lions and brained bears, how contemptible did he become after his adultery with Bathsheba, so as to be frightened by a common subaltern, like Uriah! "How?" S. Chrysostom asks him; "Art thou not a King? Hast thou not armies at thy command? Dost thou not hurl the spear? Dost thou not brandish the sword? Hast thou not Supreme authority? What hast thou then to fear, even should Uriah ever become acquainted with the wrong thou hast done him?" Alas! These are the inevitable effects, which spring from a conscience, become wholly disordered, shaken, terrified. "See, brethren, see," the holy man adds, "and mark what a dreadful thing it is to lie exposed to the penal consequences of crime. A King fears a soldier, and trembles before a subject!" But why should I dwell on this? Endless are the examples in Scripture, showing us the carnage and havoc, which sin in a variety of ways makes in the heart: for this was the sum and substance taught us by the ravings of Saul, the swoonings of Ahab, the shudderings of Belshazzar, and those misgivings, which Job so well described, when,

speaking of a sinner, he said, *A dreadful sound is always in his ears, and when there is peace he always suspecteth treason* (Job xv. 21, Vulg.)

Would that I had time to enlarge here, as I could wish; what pleasure it would afford me to confirm this truth, by adducing the evidence of almost every nation. Philo relates that, when Flaccus, the Pro-consul of Egypt, was banished for his mis-government to the petty island of Andros, he was seized with such a panic of fear, that at midnight he would start suddenly, like a man deranged, from his couch, as if he felt a person with a dagger at his throat. He would then leave his room in an agony of alarm; he would quit the house and make his escape to some open part of the country. There, raising his eyes aghast to the stars, as they sparkled in the heavens above, he would exclaim; "It is then certainly true. There is a GOD over my head." Then, enumerating his crimes one after another, "I know, I know," he continued, "that I deserve from Him a terrible punishment. I know it, I know it. The penalty of all my crimes is waiting for me. My conscience tells me it is so." At last, falling half dead upon the ground, he quaked and shivered in every limb of his body, until, going off in a cold icy sweat, he became quite unconscious. Tereus, King of Thrace, and Papirius, Senator of Rome, both committed suicide. And why? They could no longer endure the cutting reproaches of conscience; the first, for an act of adultery; the second, for an act of incest: and Pausanias tells us of the one; and Plutarch, of the other. We are left in no uncertainty, as to Tiberius, that neither the splendours of Rome, nor the luxuries of Capri, nor the most covered retreats of its enchanting groves, could prevent him from disclosing by repeated moans the inconsolable anguish of his wicked mind. "Neither prosperity nor solitude could avail Tiberius, (they are the words of Tacitus) or keep him from himself confessing the torments of his soul, and the punishment he had brought on himself." Those horrible dreams of Theodoric, of Constantius, of Anastasius, of Domitian are alike everywhere well known; and I have no time to dwell on them. Pertinax, the Emperor, could never look down upon his fish-

ponds, without fancying he saw in the water a death-like apparition, that approached him in a murderous attitude, and with a furious look threatened to bury his sword in his bosom. Caligula and Nero used to pass the greater part of the night roaming, like crazy people, about the spacious corridors of the palace, imploring the darkness to be more quick in dispersing, and the morning to hasten its return, for their relief. Suetonius relates this of them; and Plutarch further records of a certain Apollodorus, that it seemed every night to him in his dream, as if he were being flayed alive, and that, on his being afterwards thrown into a boiling caldron and there melted and dissolved, his own heart spake to him in these disdainful and reproachful words; "It is I, who have caused thee all this: I, thy conscience, I, thy conscience, I am it, that so tears thee in pieces!"

4. Admitting therefore a truth, grounded on such ample testimony, *so great a cloud of witnesses* (Heb. xii. 1), as the Apostle expressed it, let me now argue thus. Had we no other restraint laid upon us to keep us far aloof from sin—a thing truly in itself most hateful—should not this alone be quite sufficient—to know what bitter anguish it must afterwards cause us? What folly is this! To have it in your power sweetly to sleep on a bed so downy, so soft, so fragrant, as S. Bernard called a good conscience—"A good conscience is a couch, strewn with flowers"—and instead of this, to prefer lying on a rack, to be stretched and mangled with the most galling ligatures, without a moment's respite! What say you in reply to this? What excuse can ye make, sinners, for such gross stupidity? Are you then of the number of those, so oppressed with lethargy, that, as Job affirmed, they could enjoy the most delightful repose, even under quilts all interwoven with thorns and briars? *They counted it delightful to be under the briars* (Job xxx. 7). Unless I mistake, your reply will probably be this—"Let others say what they like of the excruciating mysteries, that sin inflicts upon the soul. To you this does not appear in the same light. After committing sin, you can immediately go, eat with a relish, sleep with tranquillity, and converse with pleasure; nor did a single act of murder, and much less one of adultery, or one

of incest, ever prove sufficient to drive you, in a fit of horror, to wish to die, as it affected some persons, who actually killed themselves on this account. But alas! if this be the reply I am to receive from you, I can only say, you are not the people, I expected to address here this morning. I hoped to address a people, living under the firm belief that there is a GOD in heaven, that there is such a place, as hell, that Paradise is a reality; and that to be guilty of one single such deadly sin is to be exposed to the wrath of GOD, to be pronounced worthy of hell, to be cut off from the entail of Paradise. But evils of this magnitude, if you at all believe any such, are not sufficient, after you have committed sin, to drive you into any passionate transports of fear, nor to diminish one atom your relish for food, nor your tranquillity in sleep, nor your pleasure in conversation! And what else is this, than to be profoundly immersed in that most pitiable state of torpor, which brands in Scripture the character of the wretched Esau, when he took the pottage of lintels, and *did eat, and drink, and rose up and went his way, and despised his birthright?* (Gen. xxv. 34, Vulg.) *Despised it!* Oh, blindness, blindness! Don't you perceive this to be the very thing, which ought to make the torments of our conscience much more intensely felt—the knowledge of our having reached that point, where we become insensible of it? These surely are those painless wounds, which S. Augustine pronounced to be the most fatal. These are those quiescent fevers, which were regarded by S. Chrysostom, as the most malignant. This is that calm, worse than any storm, from which, as S. Jerome cries aloud, we must withdraw the vessel—"Let go the cables! Up with the sails! Such a calm proves a tempest." Not that I entertain so bad an opinion of you, as ever to believe this to be, in matter of fact, your condition; that you are so perfectly easy in your mind, all the time you are sinning against GOD. For, as Job plainly teaches, *Who hath resisted Him and hath had peace?* (ix. 4, Vulg.) But were it, as you pretend, be assured that this tranquillity of yours could not possibly last you long. At the utmost, it might last you so long, as you might, from the confidence you have in your time of life or the strength

of your constitution, be able to put the hour of death far from you, and by this means dismiss every serious reflection upon the strictness of the judgment, and the dreadfulness of the punishment, that then awaits you. But, when the hour of death really approaches, Oh, how altered will be your feelings! Not only will you experience all those goading pains, which now seem to be blunted or suppressed in your mind; but you will find them become tenfold more exasperated. They will spring upon you, like tigers, which, if they can manage, after being long chained up, to escape, are, you know, much more furious in their attack and more savage in their bite, than they were in their native liberty. Pay attention, while I prove this.

5. Was there ever wickedness upon the earth, not to say profaneness, or impiety, which Antiochus, the King, surnamed the Great, of whom we read so much in the Book of Maccabees, had not committed? He had entered Jerusalem with a most powerful army; and, advancing determinately at once to the Temple, he had laid his audacious hands upon all its Sacred furniture, the golden altar, the golden candlesticks, and the countless vessels, all of them likewise of gold. Having cruelly massacred the inhabitants, he had then plundered their dwellings and laid them in ruins; he had gutted the public treasury, he had carried off its concealed riches; and, since he could not make away with the very walls, he had left them to be devoured by the flames. Not satisfied with this, he had compelled the few, who survived the sword and the conflagration, to renounce the Worship of the true God. He had prohibited the rite of Circumcision under the most cruel penalties; he had polluted their Sacrifices with unclean animals; he had profaned their Festival-days with senseless idolatries. Even upon the altar of the Sanctuary he had set up an abominable image, to which everyone, at certain seasons, was to make offerings; at one time, children with their throats cut; at another, virgins despoiled of their honour: and, to crown all, he had committed the Sacred Books to the flames, that they might no more be had in remembrance, and had himself with insufferable insolence dictated a new code of Laws, to supersede that of Sinai.

Notwithstanding—how he contrived it, I know not; but it is a certain fact—during the seven years he survived, not one of his many prodigious crimes ever in the least disturbed his conscience. Always in high glee, always full of self-confidence, he believed himself capable of attaining such a degree of power, as to be able some day to make ships sail, where before it was land, and carriages run, where before it was sea. So we read; "He thought to make the land navigable and the sea passable by foot: such was the haughtiness of his mind." (2 Mac. v. 21.) Well, how did it all end? When he drew nigh to the period of his days, had he power then even sufficient to repress those pains of remorse, which he had so valiantly stifled before? He found this quite beyond his strength. He takes to his bed; and, feeling his mind bowed down with a weight of sorrow, he summons about him his favourite nobles, and with a sad deep-drawn sigh, "Now do I remember," he says, "now do I remember"—And what is it that your sacred Majesty now remembers? Is it your former acts of valour? Is it your once glorious victories?—"Ah, no: the evils that I did at Jerusalem" (1 Mac. vi. 12)—But is this a proper time, now that your Majesty is indisposed, to dwell on such gloomy subjects? You rather need pleasant associations, something to entertain you. We would rather that your Majesty should now remember the immense territories you have laid waste in your resistless career. Remember how you subdued Egypt to your dominion: remember how you brought the whole of Syria under the yoke, in spite of its obstinate resistance. Was it not your Majesty, who, with four most mighty armies, so quickly mustered and brought into the field, did then overspread all Asia with arms and armed men, and even to the remotest inhabitants of the Nile, by the mere terror of your name, did then dictate the law? Yours is Babylon, that great city, the greatest probably of the wonders of the world. Yours is Antioch. Yours is Susa. Yours is all the wealth of so many conquered nations. Yours are all their innumerable spoils. Why then does not your Majesty now remember all this, and rejoice?—"Ah no, I cannot. I remember the evils that I did."—And then proceeding to recount the flagrant excesses he had per-

petrated, the wrongs, the cruelties, the oppressions, the robberies, he thus revealed to them the secret tortures of his soul; "The sleep is gone from mine eyes, and I am fallen away, and my heart is cast down with anxiety. And I said in my heart, Into how much tribulation am I come, and into what floods of sorrow, wherein now I am—I, that was pleasant and beloved in my power." (1 Mac. vi. 10, 11, Vulg.)

Now, if a man like this, one so decided a sceptic and infidel, such a supreme scorner of all right and reason, could not, when near his end, stop his ears, in spite of his principles, against the loud clamours of his conscience, and could not help shuddering at them, what can a person of a less violent temper, what can a Christian, what can a Catholic, like one of ourselves, be expected to do? Alas! in our case, it will not be only the most revolting acts of sacrilege, but every act of the slightest injustice, every sin however trivial, will rise to confront us with an aspect so appalling, as to freeze the very blood in our veins. Behold the sea, when it is perfectly calm; it looks so clear and so transparent, you would be quite positive there was not an atom of impurity in its bosom. But turn aside for a moment, and then behold the same sea in a storm; Oh, the refuse! Oh, the dregs! Oh, the mire and dirt it contains! Then all its weeds, hidden below, rise up to the surface; and it appears what it is—utterly unclean. Now tell me, how is the death of the ungodly set forth in Holy Scripture? Is it not called a storm? So Job affirms; *Their soul shall die in a storm.* (xxxvi. 14, Vulg.) Then surely all its weeds, even those buried at the lowest depths, will rise up to the surface; in other words, all the falsehoods, all the enmities, all the deceptions, all the self-conceits, all the self-displays, all the indecencies, will then assume a visible form before their eyes; and therefore only conceive, what a plight they will be in! Alas! at such a crisis the wretched beings will survey themselves, not merely with disgust, but with positive abhorrence.

The inspired Scriptures relate of Saul, that, after his defeat by the Philistines, he was found lying extended on the public road, mortally wounded by the very sword, which in a fit of despair he had plunged into his own bosom. His life was

still clinging to him, when he saw a young Amalekite not far off. He turned to him, and with a feeble voice implored him, as an act of charity, to despatch him, because he was now in the extreme of pain, and knew not by what other means he could help himself quickly out of it. *Stand, I pray thee, upon me, and slay me: for anguish is come upon me.* (2 Sam. i. 9.) Now can any of you explain to me, what that *anguish* was? Was it in his body, or soul? from men, or from devils? To settle this point, we must refer to the original Hebrew, which often brings to light very beautiful hidden significations. You must know then that in the Hebrew, instead of *Anguish is upon me,* many learned men read; *The fringes of the Priestly vestments hinder me.* Here an intimation is given, that at that time Saul seemed to behold all the Priests of Nob, whom he had so unjustly massacred, coming and striking the most poignant *anguish* into his heart, citing him to appear before the tribunal of God, and loud in their demands for vengeance. "Saul, on the point of death, thought he saw the Priests of the Lord rising up in judgment against him before the Lord."[1] The way, in which this event came to pass, was as follows, and very remarkable it is. When David, a poor persecuted outcast, fled from the presence of Saul, he once, in a state of hunger and fatigue, went to Ahimelech, the High Priest at Nob; by him he was kindly received, and supplied with food and weapons. This was unfortunately noticed by a bad unprincipled man, a servant of Saul, who, acquainted with no more probable method to oblige a timid and suspicious monarch, than by turning informer (a practice indeed abhorred, but still retained among all nations), takes the first opportunity of making what he had seen the ground of an accusation. You cannot conceive the rage, with which Saul was transported, when he received the intelligence. He summons at once into his presence Ahimelech and all his inferior priests, more than eighty-five in number, and, scowling at them, as he spake, "Well, he says, "thou art then the man to shelter my enemy David!"—"Your son-in-law rather," Ahimelech promptly replies; "and who among the servants of your Majesty is so faithful as

[1] See Tostatus—comment. in loco.

David? so prudent in peace? so formidable in war? God forbid, that I should ever shut my door in his face, when he comes to me! I have sheltered him, and shall do so again. All my family must ever take pride in showing him respect!" —"Ah, traitor," Saul resumed, "is it thus, that thou too dost conspire to deprive me of my kingdom? Thou and all thy house shall dearly pay for it. Quick—this instant—let him be put to death! Ay, to death: no delay; let every one of them be put to death! Holla! soldiers, out with your swords; down upon these Priests. Kill them; *Turn and slay the Priests of the Lord.*" (1 Sam. xxii. 17.) Would you believe it? Not one of the soldiers dared lift up a finger against the Sacred persons of these men. Thereupon the King, turning round to this same servant of his, Doeg, who had played the part of the informer, commanded him with his single hand to perform, in their stead, the entire bloody tragedy. This sacrilegious villain did not require to be long entreated to do this. Deeming it rather a feather in his cap that his accusation had succeeded so well, he felt no scruple in undertaking the office, to ingratiate himself with his master: and accordingly Saul beheld eighty-five Priests of the Lord, wearing a linen ephod, within a few moments rolling in their blood at his feet; he, all the time, refusing to listen to their complaints or supplications, and much less to receive anything they might have to urge in their defence. This then was the way, in which the event came to pass. Let us now revert to ourselves. The King, when he was on the point of death, as Tostatus observes, thought he saw these unhappy men in the same Priestly vestments, dabbled in blood and defiled with dust, now appearing before him; that they upbraided him to his face with his tyrannous barbarity, and even detained the expiring breath upon his lips, that his last struggle, by coming more slowly, might torment him the more; "Saul in his last moments thought he saw the Priests of the Lord, rising up in judgment against him before the Lord."

And now, my hearers, like as it befel the miserable Saul, so lay your account, that it will often happen to sinners throughout the world. Oh, what phantoms! Oh, what

apparitions will rise up before their minds, when the poor wretches are left forsaken in their last dying struggles! As the murdered Priests of the LORD were seen by Saul, even so will it fare at the last with sinners. Before some will rise up the labourers, whom they defrauded of their just wages—before some, the poor, whom they deserted in their extreme destitution; before some, the young, whom they misled by their pernicious bad advice,—before some, the virgins, whom they desecrated with their brutal violence,—before some, the just men, whom they ruined by their wrongful defamation,—before some, the religious men, whom they mocked with their open railleries: and then I leave you to judge, if they also won't have to groan out with Saul; *Anguish is come upon me!* Will they not? Who can doubt it? Hear the words of S. Chrysostom. "As a consciousness of guilt is at all times oppressive, so chiefly, when we are about to be taken out of the world. For then, whether a man has stolen, or defrauded, or slandered, the aggregate of all his sins is brought together before him; they glare in his sight, and afflict his soul." Hence he affirms the effect to be such, as with the convict confined in prison. Observe this convict. None can deny him to be in a constant state of perturbation and anxiety; but when, most chiefly, so?—the night immediately before his trial. On the preceding days you might chance to see him playing at cards now and then with his fellow prisoners, in high spirits, laughing, amusing himself, and cutting jokes in his loose abandoned way. But no sooner is the wretch informed that the very next morning he must appear before the seat of the judge, and be examined by torture, and take his place upon the rack or wheel—Ah, then he can no longer enjoy rest even for one single moment. His own crimes, together with the executioners, the hand-cuffs, the faggots, the engines, and other implements of death, gather close and thick upon his mind. It fares not otherwise, S. Chrysostom says, with ourselves. "As convicts in a prison are always dejected and melancholy, but especially so on the day, when they must be taken from their cells and brought into the more immediate presence of the judge, it is the same with the souls of men." And, in proof of this, have you never heard of the

terrific visions, which so often distress Christians in their last extremities? Among cases of this kind, I might instance that sufferer, mentioned by Odo the Abbot of Clugny, who fancied he saw two lions with distended claws rushing to attack him; or that other man, who was astounded by the discovery of a bear crouched under the table; or that other, who perceived a wolf prowling round about his bed; or that other, who beheld a stream of fire rolling down from the ceiling and making a deluge of his chamber. I am well aware that these are sometimes only spectral forms, assumed by the devil to frighten us, and sometimes only the natural symptoms of bodily disease, when its violence goes to the brain, and disturbs the imagination. Still, how often alas! are they the certain effects of a horrible dread in the soul, when it beholds itself, as already exposed, by reason of its sins, to the most ferocious of the brute creation, come to execute upon it the Divine Justice! To resume then the thread of my original argument, what is the use of taking so much pains and trouble to keep down those savage monsters, that make havoc of the conscience, if this, at some future time, will only serve to stimulate their greediness in preying upon it? Allow sinners, according as they desire, to enjoy to the very utmost their present tranquillity: sooner or later, they will have to suffer, either in their life-time, or when they come to die. Do we deny ourselves so many indulgencies, in order not to run the risk of their consequences, in the shape of palsies, apoplexies, scurvies, gout, and fever? And why not also deny ourselves the gratifications of sin, so as never to be exposed to that torture and carnage, allowed on all hands by Christians and Pagans, by sacred writers and profane, to be the most deadly of all?

6. When Abigail, that discreetest of her sex, wished to restrain the infuriated David from taking immediate vengeance upon his mocker Nabal, she accosted him, it is true, with many applications; she urged many pleas; she adduced many arguments. But which, among all of them, was the one to overcome him, in spite of his obduracy? Mark what it was. *It shall come to pass, when the Lord shall have done unto my lord all the good that He hath spoken concerning thee, that this*

shall be no grief unto my lord . . . . that my lord hath avenged himself. (1 Sam. xxv. 31, 32.) "Ah, my lord," she said unto him, "I see too clearly that my husband deserves from you every possible punishment; but, would you only graciously condescend to forgive him, never hereafter will you have to lament before GOD, that you requited all His goodness towards you with such an act of resentment; and this painful, rankling, excruciating thought, that you had avenged yourself, will never lie heavy upon your soul: *This shall be no grief unto thee.*" So would I also fain plead with you, my brethren, since you now condescend to give me a hearing. Is there one among you, devising at this present time some project of revenge; setting some trap in the way of unsuspecting innocence; resolved to have a share in some dirty pecuniary transaction; or in any manner whatsoever on the point of offending GOD? To such a one I would say, pause, reflect. Don't let your corrupt passions blind you to such a degree, as to conceal from your view the consequences of your misconduct. Look to the end. However great the pleasure you anticipate from this bad action, it will soon *fly away, as a dream, and shall not be found.* This I can tell you with Job. (xx. 8.) And then what anguish will succeed, what misgivings, what torments! Whereas, if, for the sake of GOD, you abandon your evil intention, Oh, what peace you will enjoy! That last day, "the day of the end," as the preacher calls it, (Ecclus. xl. 2,) will, at all events, surely come, when naked and exposed you must stand before the presence of GOD—all your pleasures ended, all your profits ended, all your honours ended. Oh, what a source of joy will it be to you, that now, at this present time, you consented to take my advice! This shall be *no grief unto thee,* that thou hast preferred reason to appetite, spirit to the flesh, the Creator to the poor perishing creature. Money, wasted in profane purposes—this *shall be no grief unto thee;* family, advanced by mean contrivances—this *shall be no grief unto thee;* cleverness, thrown away in projects of wickedness—this *shall be no grief unto thee;* power, abused in acts of insolence, this *shall be no grief unto thee;* health, ruined by vicious excesses—this *shall be no grief unto thee;*

so considerable a portion of thy life, wretchedly lost in every other business, but the sole object of thy existence—this *shall be no grief unto thee.* It is possible you may then call to mind this very Sermon I am preaching, and have cause to praise God eternally that you were present to hear it, though at the time this seemed but an accident. Thou wilt lift up thine eyes to the heavens, sobbing and weeping in the tenderness of a subdued spirit; and, "Oh, Blessed be God," thou wilt exclaim, "Blessed be God, that I refused those blind transports of passion, which so strongly urged me to offend Thee! What bitter anguish would rend my soul, now that I am brought, my merciful Lord, to understand the malignity of one single sin, as an outrage against such glorious Majesty! Thou, Thou, my God, Thou wast He, who in tender pity didst protect me; *Thou hast laid Thine hand upon me.* (Ps. cxxxix. 5). Oh, what a mercy was this! Oh, what an unspeakable favour! When shall I ever worthily praise Thee for it?" Such will thy language then be. And Oh, that it may be so with every one here present! But I know too well that all will not consent to be guided by my advice, as David was by the advice of Abigail; forasmuch as they are reckoning upon the uninterrupted enjoyment of the same treacherous calm in sinning, which they now possess. We must therefore leave them in this state of obduracy; and when, at the final close of all, you will be rejoicing together with the people, of whom we read, that "no torment shall touch them," (Wisd. iii. 1,) weeping and wailing—terrible reverse—will be their portion.

The Second Part.

7. I clearly see the inference, which sinners will cleverly contrive to draw from the last part of my discourse this morning. It is this; that, if the remorse they must needs undergo at their death be thus dreadful, so far from diminishing their present tranquillity, it will increase it; because, by the help of this very remorse, they will find it much more easy to turn to God, when their sins cause them such extreme horror; and so they will get saved. But be assured, that in this they are very much mistaken. And, to prove it, only give me your

attention. What more agonizing remorse can any sinner at his death ever feel, then what was experienced by the two Kings, whom we have at some length described to you, Antiochus and Saul? And yet did either of them, in consequence of this, turn to GOD at the last? No: both one and the other, according to the universal opinion, perished in sin. But how so? Did not sin present itself to their minds, as a frightfully deformed object? Did they not feel its curse? Did they not suffer deep sorrow and anguish of heart on its account? Yes, Sirs; but only to such an extent, as to drive them to despair. Sin appeared so great an evil in their apprehension, that the poor wretches never believed they could be forgiven; and therefore, being at the same time sore oppressed and dejected, they experienced alike both compunction and despair; compunction for their own wickedness, despair of the mercy of GOD. What is the use then of telling me, that, if the remorse you will have to endure, when you come to die, is so extreme, it will rather facilitate your conversion. False, false; it will rather facilitate your desperation. And pay no regard to that habit, you have long ago formed, of leaning, or rather of presuming, upon the Divine mercy, of saying that His mercy is unbounded, that it is infinite, and that you can lull yourself as calmly to sleep on the strength of His mercy, as a child on its mother's breast. Pay no regard, I repeat, to this habit; for so far from helping, it will, I assure you, obstruct you, and serve rather to diminish your confidence at the last. This may seem extraordinary, my hearers; but it is true. The man, who has pursued the study of literature or the fine arts, or who has trained his body to any manly exercise, finds in process of time more facility in his practice; but in your case it happens just the reverse. He, who for a long period has accustomed himself to rely on the Divine mercy, finds afterwards in process of time more difficulty in so doing. Who is to convince you of this? Am I? No, Sirs; I am no such great authority. Let Francis Xavier then. In a question of this kind, will you not credit a man, rather an Apostle, who, having embraced in his gigantic zeal two quarters of the globe, wasted away his life in visiting sinners of every age, sex, condition, profession, and language?

Well; this man, having to write from India to the members of his Order at Rome, says, that from his long experience in attending the beds of the dying he could boldly affirm, as a truth, that the sinner, who during his life was to all appearances in the highest spirits about the goodness of GOD, is the very one, who finds it the most difficult at last to raise his mind to any tolerable trust in that goodness. Hear his own words, which are most weighty; "My custom was to visit the sick, and to encourage the dying to a well-grounded and believing departure out of this world. This I found an exceeding arduous undertaking, in regard to those, who had lived in disobedience to GOD: because"—mark well what he adds—"because their hope and trust in the Divine mercy was at the hour of death less, in proportion to the degree of audacity, with which they had rioted before in their sins and iniquities." Could this fact have been more clearly stated? You are quite wrong then to promise yourself at your death the same prodigious confidence in GOD you now feel; since the very fact of your feeling so confident now will cause you to feel less confident then. But would you know the reason, why it is that now you can so easily and so largely presume on the Divine mercy? It is because sin now appears to you a trifling harm, a mere sport, an affair of politeness and fashion; but it will then present itself before you in its proper colours—a most formidable monster: and therefore, circumstances being thus reversed, is it a wonder that you will not so readily expect it to be pardoned then, as you do at this present time. Hear the lamentation of David, speaking in the person of an expiring sinner; *The sorrows of death compassed me.* (Ps. xviii. 3.)—And what comes next?—*and the overflowing of ungodliness made me afraid.* Have you noticed the expression? How does sin appear in our eyes now? As a cup of water; *Man drinketh in iniquity like water.* (Job xv. 16.) But will it appear to us in the same light at the hour of death? No, no, answers David. It will appear as an *overflowing;* as if he declared it to be a swollen impetuous torrent, such as awakens alarm, scatters destruction, spreads ruin, and in its rapid course carries everything away before it.

8. And, pray, will not the evil spirits be then at hand

with every artifice in their power, to make you sink under the grievousness of those excesses, which now seem to you so trifling; or of which you are even quite unconscious? But why speak of evil spirits? CHRIST Himself will be at hand to upbraid you with His own mouth for all the ingratitude you have heaped on His Blood. And what confidence will you then repose in one, who has taken care to set down, in minute detail, even "every idle word" you have spoken, not to mention your slanders, your blasphemies, your falsehoods? I fancy I behold Him, how at your last struggle He will appear before you—naked, wounded, gory, all besmeared with blood. On His right side and on His left are His ministering Angels armed with storm and terror, while, bearing in His hand the ponderous register of all human delinquencies, He will begin reading over yours in regular succession; sounding aloud, as He proceeds, in the ears of your conscience, now no longer sealed in deafness, those fearful words in the Psalm; *These things thou hast done, and I kept silence.* (l. 21.) "Thou from thy childhood to thy youth and from thy youth to thy riper years hast committed all manner of evil against Me—*and I kept silence;* in all thy past life, thou hast rejected and despised every thing, that I commanded thee, as being good for thy soul and conducive to My honour and glory—*and I kept silence;* thou hast gone on rioting and revelling in thine own way, after the wickedness of thine heart and the course of this world—*and I kept silence;* even to thine old age, thou hast obstinately persisted in thy vicious habits, and gone on adding sin to sin—*and I kept silence.* And didst thou then indulge the thought—didst thou *think wickedly, that I was such a one as thyself?* Didst thou think, that I should always *keep silence?* that I should never be roused to resentment? *I have long time holden My peace; I have been still and refrained Myself; but now I will cry like a travailing woman.* (Isa. xlii. 14.) And, forasmuch as during all thy life thou didst never prize My Blood, but didst shamefully trample it under foot, as the dung of the earth, Behold, this same Blood, which would have been thy Redemption, is turned to thy condemnation!" . . . On His vanishing then from thy sight, a frightful company of devils will seem to make their furious onset

upon thee, some clenching thee by the arms, some by the feet, some by the hair, each contending with the other, who shall have the glory of making thee his prisoner and dragging thee down to hell. And, at a crisis like this, will you find yourself so resolute and firm of purpose, as to trust in the goodness of GOD? Oh, what a fool to entertain any such expectation! If this therefore be utterly beyond our power, let us fall back upon our primary design, and again ask ourselves—what benefit can we derive from that intense remorse, which we shall experience at our death? Will it serve to help forward our salvation? By no means. It will serve to impede us; it will serve to torment us; it will serve to plunge us with accelerated violence into the abyss of despair.

9. What then, under such circumstances, must we now do, since we have still the time? We must repent; yes, I repeat it, we must repent: this is the work we must do: and this will have the certain effect of so composing our consciences, as to remove from them every source of disquietude; that we may *lead a quiet life*, as the Apostle said—and, as he adds—*in all godliness*. Every other contrivance we may resort to will prove ineffectual. To what purpose do you devote your thoughts and time to games and dissipation, to public amusements and a routine of self-indulgence? Ah, so long as a sense of guilt, like a sharp penetrating thorn, cleaves to the conscience, every healing plaister, applied for the mitigation of the pain, will do nothing for you. The thorn must be extracted,—do you hear what I say?—the thorn must be extracted. If we give it time to settle, it will strike so deep a root—it will identify itself so completely with our flesh—as to throw us into a never-ending paroxysm of anguish and raving despair—*I am turned; but it is in my anguish, while the thorn sticks fast in me.* (Ps. xxxi. 4, Vulg.)

SERMON XXV.

ON PARENTAL OBLIGATION.

S. John ix. 20, 21.

"His parents answered them and said; We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but by what means he now seeth we know not, or who hath opened his eyes, we know not."

1. Whosoever among you will, let him contrive an excuse for the parents of this blind man in the Gospel. I make no excuse at all for them. They profess to be ignorant how the eyes of their own son were opened; *We know that he was born blind; but by what means he now seeth we know not.* Is this then the care they take of him? Is this their forethought, their anxiety about him? But the blind man after all was happy in this, that He, who opened his eyes, was Jesus, who could do it, for no other end, than his advantage. The mischief is, that he, who opens the eyes of most people, is the devil. And yet, in this case likewise, who shows any care or anxiety about the matter? Fathers will often allow their children to grow up too sharp-witted by far, depraved, and artful; and then they coolly excuse themselves by saying, that they know not where they could ever have learned so much wickedness. *Who hath opened his eyes, we know not.* Ah, what a frivolous, what a silly excuse have we here! For to what does their duty oblige them, if not to this; to see that their children should for ever continue rather in that blind state, in which they were born—I mean, grow up in

holy simplicity and unacquaintedness with evil—than have their eyes opened by any other hand, than His, who this day gave sight to the blind? But how very few are the parents, who understand, or who discharge this duty! What most of them supremely desire is to have children. For this they pray, for this they go on pilgrimages; and, when they have children, they dismiss all thought about their education; as if it were better for them to have a set of reprobates, than no offspring at all. There are certain trees, we know, which, though barren of all fruit, are yet so highly prized, as to be considered a luxury in our magnificent Royal gardens. More than this, in the choice, which the heathen deities made in times of old from among many different plants, they studiously preferred the less fruitful to the more productive. Hence, Jupiter made choice of the oak, Apollo of the laurel, Neptune of the pine, Osiris of the ivy, Juno of the juniper, Venus of the myrtle. But, as for the tree, that yielded bad fruit, no one ever wished to see this growing in his garden. So far was any deity from conceiving a liking for it, that not even a common peasant would be found to care about it. Therefore, let every one this morning understand the vast responsibility, involved in the fact of having a child. Certainly, I shall not think my labour, however great, bestowed in vain, if I can prove this obligation to the satisfaction of any person, hitherto sceptical on the point, or, who for want of due consideration, is betrayed into those abuses and inconsistencies, I shall have to mention; not as if I supposed them to exist among you, but rather with a view to prevent their ever getting a footing in this place. Oblige me therefore with your attention.

2. And to begin with the vastness of the obligation; for this often most clearly brings to light the evil of any abuse. I know perfectly well, that there are many other persons too, who will be accountable for your child, who share in your grave responsibility; for instance, the masters, who ground them in their first lessons; the tutors, who form their manners; the pastors, who instruct their consciences; the preachers, who awaken their piety; and even Ecclesiastical and civil rulers, who should in a special manner provide by legal enact-

ments for the welfare of the young, just as gardeners concern themselves, most of all, for the most delicate plants. But you will be convinced, on closer inquiry, that your duty obliges you alone, more than it does all the rest put together, to seek to do them good. The chief reason whereof is, that the rest lie under an obligation, imposed upon them by civil polity; but you are under one, implanted in you by nature.

And are you not all well aware, that with the same cause, which has generated any given effect, it also rests to carry onward that effect, as far as it can, to perfection? For attend in its bearing upon our subject, to the beautiful doctrine of T. Aquinas, taken from his marvellous Book against the Gentiles. There are effects, of two kinds, distinct from each other, to be considered; some, which are no sooner produced, than they reach the full perfection, which their natures are capable of receiving; others, which do not become perfect in this way, but have to acquire it in process of time and by gradual degrees. To the first class belong all creatures, devoid of life. Accordingly, the cause, which is, in a sense, the mother, that begat them, having, once for all, given them birth, no longer with maternal affection keeps them close to itself; it does not train them, nor tenderly cherish them, but immediately abandons them. Let us exemplify this in two cases, with which we are all perfectly familiar—water and fire. Look at the fountain, when it has brought forth the water; look at the flint, when it has brought forth the fire. Neither of them ever retains its offspring close to itself; but one lets the water at once make its escape and rush to the streams; the other at once lets the fire fly off and seize upon the tinder: and they act in this manner, simply because neither the flint nor the fountain have it in their power, by keeping their offspring close to themselves, to advance in any way their perfection. But the reverse takes place in all such effects whatsoever, as are endued with life. These are all born into the world in a state of imperfection, and therefore remain under the care and, so to speak, within the folding arms of their mother for a long period, that she may lovingly cherish and make them perfect. First, we see this most evi-

dent in the case of the apples, the flowers, the corn, the grapes, and all other like productions of nature. These are born small in size, deficient in taste, in colour, in form; needing therefore the utmost management. Hence you observe for what a length of time the apples cling to their bough, the flowers to their stem, the ears of corn to their stalk, grapes to their branches, and every other fruit adheres to the bosom of its own parent; so that more strength of hand is required, as you may perhaps have found, to separate the apple, when it is unripe, than when it is ripe, from the tree; as if the child felt a reluctance to be parted from its mother, and the mother a reluctance to abandon its child, before the one had given, and the other had received, the full requisite perfection. But the same fact is still more clearly proved in the case of animals, who also enter the world in an imperfect state. Among them, it is reported of the ostrich only, that she unfeelingly deserts her offspring, when she has once brought them to day-light; *She leaveth her eggs in the earth,* as Job informs us, (xxxix. 14); and on this account she is set forth, as an example of foolishness and of insensibility, GOD Himself awfully pronouncing against her; *She is hardened against her young ones, as though they were not her's; because God has deprived her of wisdom, neither hath He imparted to her understanding.* But you will find, among all other brute animals, that not one of them goes without its tender nursing care; only with this difference, also observed by the same Aquinas, namely, that some of them receive their education from the mother alone, others both from the father and mother united. By the mother alone are dogs, horses, lambs, calves, and other sucking animals educated. The mother's milk suffices of itself for the purposes of their nutrition; and therefore the father, feeling his services not to be wanted, generally does not concern himself about them, or even take notice of them. The contrary happens among birds. There is not a single one of their species, whom nature has provided with milk or breast—and for this reason; that, since they have to wing their rapid flight through the air, a weight of this description would in their case prove a serious incumbrance. They must therefore, so to say, get their lives by plunder, and contrive

to support themselves by finding food, as occasion offers, not only for their own maintenance, but for that of their helpless little ones, who are generally found to be no less greedy, than they are numerous. But how could the weak female bird ever lay in so large a store? Therefore in the case of doves, turtles, partridges, and other like birds, especially of a tame species, the father also bears a part in catering for the family. And not only do all brute animals provide their young with food, until they can procure it for themselves; but they assist them with advice, with directions, with the results of their own experience, according to the different modes of living, they have to be taught. Thus, the sparrow-hawk instructs his progeny in the chace; thus the dolphin shows his, how to swim; the lioness hers, how to pursue the prey; the hen hers, how to scratch for food; the eagle hers, how to mount on the wing sublime, *enticing her young to fly*. (Deut. xxxii. 11, Vulg.) Nevertheless, for the most part, brute animals never receive any token of acknowledgment, either in deed or good will, from their young; but, no sooner is the term requisite for education completed, than the parent no more recognizes the offspring, and the offspring no more recognizes the parent; but they part company, and each goes, where his own interest may invite him. Now, in spite of this last circumstance, if, having newly brought them into the world, they are so careful, by performing every duty of affection and sympathy towards them, to nurse, to feed, to protect, to assist them, can any one be so blind, as not to see, that this same law of rendering one's offspring as perfect as we possibly can, is not a law to be regarded, as the mere device of political or civil government, but as one, planted in every heart by nature herself? Nature herself therefore demands of mankind the observance of this same law—yea, she demands it more of mankind, than she does of the brute creation. For men, on the one hand, are born in a state of less perfection, as Pliny considered; the brute animals at their birth being, in a measure, clothed, but men naked; they more or less armed and defended, but we quite naked and exposed. And, on the other hand, men are born with a capacity for higher degrees of perfection, which they must however reach by slow stages: hence,

this education cannot, like that of the brutes, be completed in a few days, but must be extended over a considerable period of time; or rather, as T. Aquinas says, over the whole life however protracted; and it is this fact, which renders Matrimony in its own nature indissoluble.

From the exquisite teaching of this holy Doctor, a man truly more Angelical[1] than mortal, we will draw, as from certain most sure premisses, our principal conclusion, and argue thus. If the obligation binding parents to educate their children is not a positive, but a natural obligation; not in the statute, but in the heart; not human, but Divine; is it not perfectly clear that the demand, made upon you to provide for their welfare, must be far more imperative, than it is upon any Princes or Prelates, pastors or masters, tutors or preachers, or any other moral guide or director in Church or State whatsoever? For these persons are only obliged to this duty by the civil law, which is less stringent, whereas you are obliged to it by the express appointment of nature—which is infinitely more constraining.

3. But, if this be true, what fears ought you to entertain for yourselves, whenever you neglect to provide them with such an education! For, if the Prince is so accountable, and the Prelate is so accountable, and other persons are so accountable, in the event of your son's coming to a bad end, through any fault on their part, how far more accountable must you be, ye fathers and ye mothers, if the same should happen through any fault of yours? Will these other persons be so severely reproved, and can you hope to pass free

[1] An allusion is here made to the title of honour, bestowed on T. Aquinas, "the Angelic Doctor." In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the Scholastic age of the Church, some other leading Theologians were thus distinguished by titles, bearing testimony to some peculiar value in their writings. Albert, a German Scholastic, of the highest authority in his day, and the teacher of T. Aquinas, was called "Albert the Great." His opponent, a countryman of our own, Alexander Hales, acquired the name of "the Irrefragable Doctor;" while John Duns Scotus, a Scotchman, who combated some of the opinions of T. Aquinas, went by the name of "the Subtle Doctor." Peter of Lombardy, on account of his Book of Extracts from the Fathers, was styled "The Master of the Sentences:" and Bonaventure, for a still higher cause, the extraordinary flights of his devotion, though considerably tinctured with mysticism, received the appellation of "the Seraphic Doctor."

from all blame? Will they be so rigorously judged, and can you hope to obtain favour? It was on this account that S. Chrysostom, who so thoroughly understood the matter, earnestly exhorted all parents, in the words of the Apostle, to *bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,* (Eph. vi. 4,) "for, if we also are under a command to be diligent, as they, who must give an account for their souls, how much more is required of the father, who begat them?" Christian parents, do you hear this? "How much more is required of the father, who begat them?" It is you, who have given them being; to you, therefore, it most properly belongs to give them likewise their perfection, bringing them up *in the nurture of the Lord;* which is by inclining them to what is good; and then *in the admonition of the Lord,* which is the deterring them from what is evil; or, according to the more concise explanation of T. Aquinas, *in the nurture and the admonition* of good instructions. Consider, moreover, that this task of giving them their perfection is one, that can be more easily accomplished by you, than by any other person; because, since they are naturally disposed to love and to respect their fathers, beyond any one else, your authority over them is in consequence proportionately great. By an apposite word of advice, by a timely reproof, and even with half a sentence, with a sign, with a nod, with a glance you can influence them more, than others could with many long speeches and reiterated clamours. Have you never heard of the celebrated Andrew Corsini? At the first outbreak of youth, he was wild, headstrong, and dissipated. In vain did many holy and zealous servants of God labour to reclaim him: all was useless. But where the priestly exhortations failed, the voice of a mother told. Pellegrina by a single apt remonstrance brought him into the way of holiness, and transformed him from the violence of a wolf into the submissiveness of a lamb. If then you fail to employ this powerful authority, that you possess, will you not have to answer most strictly to God for the neglect? Besides, upon you it is, that they depend for their clothing, upon you for their food, upon you for their means, upon you for their inheritance; so that it remains with you with the utmost facility to mould them, according to your

wishes; encouraging and rewarding them, when they behave well; threatening and punishing them, when they go astray.

What imaginable excuse therefore can you plead, if you come short in your duty? Again, and still more to the point, you must remember, that you have them under your control, like so many fledglings in a nest, from their early childhood, when their minds are exactly like pulpy clay, capable of any stamp, or like soft wax, susceptible of any impression. If therefore, as the effect of your having brought them up badly, they show little disposition afterwards to profit by the instructions of their more advanced teachers, who will be chiefly to blame? The chief blame will light upon you: yes, Sirs, upon you: for we have it on the authority of S. Chrysostom, that, "when a father takes his tender child in hand, and is the first and only person to educate him, he will have no difficulty in instilling good principles into him, and forming his character." Hence, if you neglect this duty, the principal blame of their unruly bad tempers must be laid at your door: nay, every attempt, that other people set on foot with a view to their happiness, will be quite powerless, while you parents neglect your duty. For, what benefit can arise from the provision of noble institutions, made by Princes in a commonwealth, of renowned Universities, of well-endowed fellowships and colleges, for the education of the young, if you decline sending them to those places? And how can any masters succeed in cultivating in them a taste for learning, while you take no interest whatever about it? And the tutors, how can they ever regulate their habits, if you refuse to lend them a helping hand? And the pastors and the preachers too, how can they promote their spiritual welfare—the one by public addresses, the other by private admonitions—if you do not oblige your sons to wait and attend upon both for these very purposes?

You see then that all the obligations, which in a manner are divided and scattered, as they bear upon others, meet together in their entireness and centre in you. Therefore, beyond what is fabled of that most prudent King Argus, how much does it concern you, to keep your eyes ever on the

watch, in observing the conduct of your sons! Your business it is to mind every word they speak; yours to control every impulse they feel; yours to acquaint yourself with everything they do—anxious cares, which, as a whole, devolve only on yourselves. Nor will it be enough for you merely to furnish them with directions; you must make them obey you; and this, not in one place, but everywhere; out of doors, in the city, in public, in private, in the thoroughfares, in the retired dwelling. Your duty is to observe what resorts they frequent, with whom they associate, the bias of their minds, and the peculiarities of their tastes; and, inasmuch as the wise man has said that *by his inclinations a child is known* (Prov. xx. 11, Vulg.), you ought, if it be possible, yes, you ought to manage to dive into their very thoughts. And don't think that I say this by way of giving a finish to my period; rather consider it to have been the very thing, which caused holy Job to suffer perpetual anxiety in the management of his children; his not knowing what tempers were breeding in their hearts, and what they might be hatching in their minds. Hence we are told, he often rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt-offerings and supplications, that his sons might be purified from every secret fault; for Job said, *It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.* (i. 5.) Mark his intense anxiety! He does not say in their lips; he does not say on their tongues; no, *in their hearts:* such were his fearful apprehensions, lest some fault should be discovered in them, not open, but concealed; not on the bare surface, but within; not only admitted, but even questionable.

4. What can you now say for yourselves? Is this your mode of acting? In the discharge of these weighty duties do you evince any such anxiety? Are you also equally concerned for the uprightness of your sons, their purity, their real interests? Alas! you attend to any other business, in preference to this, says S. Chrysostom. Your exclusive study is to make your sons more wealthy, more feared, more honoured, more powerful; but to make them more virtuous as well, this never occurs to you. "Some provide for their sons military rank; some, honours; some, titles; some, riches; no one provides God for them." And yet this is the only provision,

for neglecting which you will be called to give an account. It will not be inquired of you, to what extent you left them more wealthy, or more conspicuous by high office, or more aggrandized by worldly connections; but this only, whether you left them more commendable for virtue. That is the point, on which God will insist upon having satisfaction at His most terrible tribunal.

And what account will you be able to give Him, when on certain occasions, for the mere sake of handing over to them a few more wretched dollars, you have not scrupled to place in jeopardy their everlasting Salvation? Again, how often, had you only consented to spare a little more money, you might have secured to them the advantages of a superior order of tuition, a more refined discipline, a higher tone of education; and you have done them this injury, just to gain this miserable saving. Oh shame! exclaims S. Chrysostom, whom I have gladly selected this morning to be an authority in a matter, he has so admirably handled. Oh shame! We grudge not money, that we may increase the productiveness of our fields, and the comfort of our dwellings, nor to render the kitchen better supplied, the stable more tenanted, the equipage more handsome; but to render a son more virtuous, we haggle for every farthing. This however might seem to be of small moment in my opinion, were not matters so much worse; for it often happens that, when you have two servants in your employ, one of them intelligent and faithful, the other stupid and depraved, you go in your avaricious spirit and intrust the care of your land to the good servant, and the care of your children to the bad one. And what excuse will you make for such heedlessness? You would never venture to leave your horse to the care of a half-witted stable-boy, or your flocks to the charge of a dishonest herdsman, or your oxen to the management of a thoughtless clown; and yet you are not afraid to consign that son of yours to the custody of an unprincipled menial, or an ignorant pedagogue. Such outrageous conduct, dear Christians, admits of no excuse. It is perfectly inexcusable; for, if self-interest be the motive, which prompts you to prefer your worldly goods to your dear children, can any thing be mentioned more wicked, more irrational, more insane?

Certainly, could I regard you, as chiefly actuated by this motive in thus mismanaging your sons' education, my desire would be to follow the steps of a certain old philosopher. I would mount one of the most elevated towers of your city; from thence I would storm in my fury, and vociferate in a pealing thunder; "Whither away in such haste, ye men? Whither away in such haste, bestowing thus all your care upon getting money, and no care at all upon the education of your children, to whom you will have to leave it?" Oh, ye citizens, I would exclaim, where are you going? One to the attorney, about a lawsuit, one to the bankers for cash, one to the court for promotion, one to the shops for purchases, one to the money-lending offices for interest. And, all this time, where have you deposited your sons? If in the hands of some really trustworthy keepers, well and good; go on, proceed with your business: but if, all this time, they should be in some juvenile club, there to become proficients in wickedness; or in some gaming establishment, there to handle the dice; or in some licentious theatre, there to hear the rehearsal; or in some infamous quarter of the town, there to ruin themselves in debauchery; or, at least, in some idle watering place, there to spend half the year in doing nothing; come back, I would then say, come back, ye inhuman fathers; first take care of your children, and then mind your property. Such would really be my desire, in imitation of that philosopher, mentioned by Plutarch, thus to cry aloud: for in this I shall be supported by the authority of S. Chrysostom, who compares conduct like this on your part to that of a gardener, who, while wholly intent on providing water to nourish his plants, entirely overlooks the very plants he wishes to nourish; whether they grow up fair or ugly, strong or degenerate. This pretence therefore of your having other interests necessarily to attend to, however lawful those interests may be, cannot serve to justify you in the sight of GOD; because there is no interest, which you should consider, as anything to be compared in its importance to that of the proper education of the offspring GOD has given you. And, this being the case, what else can you adduce to exculpate yourself? Will you not be convicted of inexcusable cruelty, perfidiousness, and treachery?

Only suppose the difficulty you would be in, were you charged with a wilful neglect in providing milk for your children, when they were babes; or food for them, when they grew up; or garments for them to cover their nakedness; or a bed for them, whereon to sleep and repose? Under such a charge, would you not, beyond all doubt, be totally speechless? And yet, in this case, you would only have neglected to provide for their least worthy part, the body: what then must it be to neglect that, which is the most noble, the soul? What must it be, when, having it in your power, you never once provided them with a judicious instructor, with a faithful servant, with an approved spiritual guide, with useful books, with seasonable maxims, with safe friends, with examples, with counsels, with encouragements, with restraints, with patterns, and with all other helps and assistances, such as are indispensable to the life of a Christian? "Hast thou children?" demands the Preacher, "instruct them" (Ecclus. vii. 23); he does not say enrich them; he does not say advance them in the world; no, *instruct them.* For to make them good should, above everything else, be your main consideration.

5. Would to GOD, however, that no other sin besides this were chargeable against you; namely, that you failed to promote the salvation of your children! There is another still greater than this. What? Why, to promote your children's ruin. To promote their ruin! Yes! yes, I say; to promote your children's ruin! Oh, this you would yourselves allow to be indeed an enormity, so very hateful, as for ever to shut your mouths against every attempt in your own excuse; and I too, that I might worthily hold it up this morning to your detestation, would fain have lungs of brass and a voice of thunder. What can you say? Is not a sin of this kind quite common among you? Alas, it were almost to be wished, that in these days some parents would not only decline taking any part whatever in their children's education, but that they would immediately, after their birth, pack them up in some ark, resembling that, which received the infant Moses, and so turn them adrift to take their chance in some creek, or rocky woodland shore; to such a degree are the

principles and rules of life they teach them false and flagitious. It is on the authority and express assertions of my eloquent S. Chrysostom, that I am still grounding my argument. He says; "I would that the faults of parents never exceeded this; that they entirely disregarded the welfare of their children. This, though a grievous offence, might yet be tolerated. But now you encourage them to a course of conduct, the most adverse to their salvation; and, as if their final ruin was to be your supreme aim, you enjoin them with this view to do all those things, which place the doers thereof beyond the reach of being saved."

Would you be thoroughly convinced that this is true? Then listen. The Law of the Gospel, which you ought together with their mother's milk to infuse into your dear little ones, proclaims aloud against the rich the most awful denunciation of everlasting misery. *Woe unto you that are rich* (S. Luke vi. 24).[1] But, in direct opposition to this, from their early dawn you begin to instil this lesson into their mind, that they must keep a firm hold upon their property, and that man's chief happiness consists in having his coffers well laden, his barns full of store, and his cellars overflowing. Perhaps you hold an occasional private conference with that son of yours, still of a tender age. "Take good notice," you say, "of that merchant; take good notice of that Canon; take good notice of that cavalier. Because they all managed to accumulate so much money, don't you see how they are risen in the world? One has built for himself that fine house; one has secured that good living; one has formed that noble connection. Can I believe that you will ever contrive to

[1] This too absolute condemnation is very properly qualified by Segneri, in his beautiful and most popular work, the *Manna dell' anima*—"Consider, that just as CHRIST, when He pronounced the poor blessed, did not mean it of all the poor, but of those only, who were 'poor in spirit,' so He limits His meaning here, when He pronounces a woe on the rich. Because, when a person has immense wealth, and yet does not set his heart upon it, and therefore only employs it in such objects, as GOD either orders or allows him, the case is evident: such a one receives not thence his 'consolation.' 'Blessed is the rich, that is found without blemish, and hath not gone after gold. Who is he? And we will call him blessed.' (Ecclus. xxxi. 8, 9.) Desire thou rather not to have riches, than have them with this condition of living detached from them: the first is easy; the second is a miracle." (Med. on S. Luke vi. 24, for Jan. 20.)

make your way, as they have done?" By these means, you create in their minds such an exalted opinion of money, that they learn to regard gold, as being the most mighty god in the whole earth. Further; the Gospel says, that we ought to take our place at the remote end; *Sit down in the lowest room* (S. Luke xiv. 10). And you are constantly inducing your sons to do the contrary, suggesting to them that no one should be satisfied with the condition, in which he is born; but that, like a river, he should be always on the advance, spreading abroad, expanding himself. Further; the Gospel affirms, that we ought to forgive the injuries done us; *Love your enemies* (S. Luke vi. 27). And you are for ever insinuating the very opposite doctrine into their minds, telling them that no one should forget any affronts which he has received; but that, like a mastiff, he should always shew his teeth to every one, answering again, doing himself justice. And Oh, how many will say to their children, "Our family has invariably been feared and respected, quite as much as any other. It has produced such great senators, and cavaliers, and captains, and men renowned both in peace and war. You will not act worthy of the escutcheon you bear, if you don't know on every occasion how to stand up for your rights. Accordingly, you begin to teach them at a very early period the use of weapons, that the little conceited things may assume the airs of so many heroes; and, when they grasp a pistol in their delicate fingers, you are louder in your applauses, than when you see them sharpening a pen for the purposes of study.

Then, these good mothers too—what are the maxims, which they usually make a point of impressing on their daughters? Are they those maxims of the Gospel, which teach us to renounce idle talk and superfluous luxuries? *Take no thought for the body, what ye shall put on.* (S. Luke xii. 22.) Rather, quite the reverse. Go, my girl, they will say; go, and tell your father that you wish to appear, as well dressed, as your equals. Tell him, that you feel quite ashamed to appear in society, as you are; and that he must produce out of his coffers those ribbons, and those ear-rings, and those necklaces, and those bracelets, or, give up all hope, that I

your mother will ever consent to take you out walking with me, even to attend Mass. Then decking them out to-day with one sort of finery and to-morrow with a different, you inure them betimes bravely to harden themselves against the cold piercing air, with their shoulders exposed, or but feignedly covered and protected; under the notion that in matters of dress they must keep to the fashion of the day; and let preachers exhaust their breath and lash out against them to their hearts' content. Behold, my brethren, what admirable precepts many fathers and many mothers now deliver to their children. And what, I pray you, is the consequence of this? The consequence of this is, that, their minds still easily impressible, having once taken in this kind of seed, gradually begin to strike such deep roots of pride, of conceit, of affectation, of ambition, of selfishness, and of every other inordinate temper, that, in process of time, when they come to their full strength, it defies any human power to keep under the poisonous exuberance. *A young man according to his way*—that way, that inclines him to evil rather than to good—*even when he is old, he will not depart from it* (Prov. xxii. 6, Vulg.) And does this, in your opinion, at all extenuate your guilt? You must, I cannot but believe, have heard very often of Eli, the High Priest, that he made GOD to such a degree his enemy, as to deprive him, beyond recovery, of the Priesthood, of the temple, of his possessions, of his life, of his issue; and so severely was he judged, that, although, for the sake of the qualities he possessed in matters of religion, he was most probably saved, yet Philo the Jew, S. Gregory of Nazianzum, S. Isidore of Pelusium, S. Cyril of Alexandria, S. John Chrysostom, and S. Peter Damian rather incline to the opinion that he was lost; Cæsarius, Archbishop of Arles, and Ephrem, of the Syriac Church, clearly understanding this to have been the case. How was it, that Eli brought on himself so appalling a condemnation? I would rather you should hear the reason from the LORD Himself; *I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity, which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever.* (1 Sam. iii. 13,

14.) His over-indulgent treatment of his abandoned sons was the sin, that involved him in this very extreme punishment: for this one sin alone GOD professed Himself so highly incensed, that neither sacrifices, nor victims, nor prayers, could ever serve to pacify Him—it may be, in regard to eternity; certainly, in regard to this present life. Is it really so? Hear it then, my brethren, and tremble for yourselves. For, if this unhappy man received so tremendous a castigation for the simple fault of his not having reproved or punished his sons with the requisite authority and strictness for their misdeeds—*because he restrained them not*—alas! what must those parents have to fear, who not only fail to deter their sons from what is evil, but even drive them to it by such most pernicious maxims? If the omission to punish sin caused so fierce displeasure, what must be the consequence of our encouraging sin, of our recommending it, of our making ourselves most criminally the authors and originators of it? To wretches, acting thus, can there remain any hope whatever of salvation? As to this, I pronounce no sentence. But one thing I will ask you. Were you to deliver these same licentious principles to any other young person, quite a stranger to you,—say, to some Jew, to some Gentile, to some Turk,—what a heavy judgment before the tribunal of GOD would await you for such conduct!

Corruptors of youth! corruptors of youth! It is not in the power of words to express how odious they are in His sight. Hence it was, that where we read in Scripture, *Take up the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines,* (Cant. ii. 15,) S. Jerome has another probable reading of the passage; "Take up the foxes that spoil the little vines;" as if the term *little* did not apply so much to the foxes, as to the *vines*. For, in truth, the foxes, that are most odious in the sight of GOD, are the grey-bearded veterans, become now more daring in their attacks upon the little vines, that tender estate of youth, which they strip root and branch, and utterly demolish. These are the foxes, which, above all others, the LORD would *take up*, that He may destroy them for ever. My conclusion therefore is this. If, for giving bad advice to any young person, in general, on his outset in life, you are so strictly

accountable to God, how infinitely more accountable you will be for giving it to your own child; to one, for whom you are bound by the ties of nature to provide an education so improving, a course of instruction so Divine! Think on this, and I will pause to get a little rest.

The Second Part.

6. The prophet Elisha had witnessed the ascent to heaven of Elijah his master in a chariot of fire. He was now on his return, going up to Bethel, when behold a numerous concourse of little children, who on seeing him all raised their voices with one accord, and mocked him, crying aloud, *Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head.* (2 Kings ii. 23.) Astounded by such daring arrogance at so tender an age, Elisha was quite unable to repress his indignation. With a stern look he accosts the scoffing little urchins, and pronounces them accursed in the Name of the Lord. *He cursed them in the Name of the Lord.* Would you believe it? Hardly were the words out of his mouth, than two most hideous bears rushed out of an adjoining wood, and dashing into the midst of these children, as into a herd of terrified lambs, began to tear them in pieces, to besmear them with blood, and to scatter their mangled remains far and wide in the most outrageous and revolting manner. *And there came two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them.* These children, my brethren, as commentators, on your consulting them, will tell you, were not capable of any malignant ill-feelings; for Scripture declares them to have been *little children.* How then are we to understand their being, notwithstanding this, so cruelly punished? Can you tell me? It was for the chastisement of their parents, who at the time were bringing them up so badly; it was as Liranus and many others assure us, "that in the children their parents might be punished." Beloved Christians, confess. Do you not often bring up your children devoid of all fear of God? Do you not indulge them, and let them have their own way, from a fear, lest they should turn out, to use your own language, "canting hypocrites," instead of fine hearty fellows? What

punishment are you likely to receive, even in this present life, for treating them in this manner? It may be your lot to see them one day stretched out at your feet, carried off by an untimely and disgraceful death. "The children will complain of an ungodly father, because they shall be reproached for his sake." (Ecclus. xli. 7.) But grant they escape for a season such a calamity, may they not still occasion you a sorrow and anxiety, remorse and anguish, scarcely less bitter? "Cocker thy child, and he will make thee afraid; play with him, and he will bring thee to heaviness." (Ecclus. xxx. 9.)

How sore was Hagar's mortification, when she was forced to wander an outcast in the desert, because of Ishmael, whom she had brought up with ideas above his station! How great was David's mortification, when he was called to see his throne crumbling under him, because of Absalom, whom he had governed with too gentle a hand! And the patriarch Jacob, what mortifications had he also to suffer on account of Dinah his daughter? Listen to the narrative; for you may learn very much from it. The good old man with all his belongings had in the course of his peregrinations reached Canaan; and there on a plot of ground, purchased of the Shechemites for that purpose, he had planted his tents, distributed his numerous attendants, and provided a resting place for his cattle. When Lo! Dinah his daughter, who was fifteen years old, having heard, as Josephus tells the story, that at a short distance off all the females of Shechem were assembling themselves together for a great feast, asks her father's permission just to be allowed to go and see them; for indeed it grieved her sore to be shut up a prisoner, pining away in these tents the live-long day. How little would it have cost Jacob to have used his authority at first in restraining this womanish curiosity of his daughter, so natural to her youth! But, in his over-indulgence, he was loath to cause her grief; and so, that he might not any longer see her in tears at his feet, he says, "Well then, I let you; you may go." Shall Dinah then go? Alas! unhappy girl, Alas! unhappy father! See in what an intricate labyrinth are you both on the point of entangling yourselves unawares! Let us proceed to the sequel, which is indeed most appalling. The virgin left the tent, to

get a sight of these foreign women, but, with all her caution and reserve, she was nevertheless observed by a certain man, who became ardently enamoured of her, seized on her person, dishonoured her; and, happening to be of high rank, no less than a chief among the Shechemites, named Shechem, he prevailed upon her afterwards by dint of flatteries to stay in his house, and to consent to take him, as her lawful husband. Application is therefore made to Jacob, cast down beyond measure at the tidings of what had taken place; and everything, likely to give the utmost satisfaction to men, who were strangers in the land, is then proposed. Shechem offers to settle on his spouse a rich endowment, to make her princely gifts; he promises her all manner of plenty, and binds himself to the maintenance of a perpetual alliance with the people of Israel, then but small in importance. He is moreover willing to assign for their use and pleasure his lands, pastures, and other possessions. While they were all intent on this negotiation, behold, Jacob's sons return from their flocks. They are told of their sister's disgrace: they hold a brief conference among themselves, and come to a final resolution; then, concealing in their bosoms the dreadful revenge they intended to take, they profess their readiness to comply with the terms, offered by Shechem; but at the same time they interpose one objection to the arrangement, which was that they could not form such an alliance with men uncircumcised. The Shechemites therefore must make up their minds to submit to their Law; they must all be circumcised; and then the much desired union would take effect, and the family connection on both sides be ratified. What will not a soul, under the maddening impulse of love, consent to do? The chief accepts the condition; he stipulates, and confirms the treaty: and then, returning home elated with joy, he induces the people by various persuasive arguments to give their consent to it. But what came next? No sooner on the dawn of the third day—the critical time, when every wound causes the greatest pain—behold, Simeon and Levi, the two brothers of Dinah, come fully armed into the city, and, while the men were all confined to their beds in a state of bodily suffering, quite unsuspicious of any treachery, and

utterly incapable of offering any resistance, they set about a most tremendous massacre; they kill the young, they kill the middle-aged, they kill the hoary-headed: be he who he will, if a male, he must die: then, speedily rushing on to the palace, they furiously lay hold on the detested Shechem, at once dispatch him, annihilate him; and rescuing Dinah convey her back to the tents of her father; she now become a young widow, before she was a married wife. Nor did their rage stop here: for, retracing their steps to the former scene of slaughter, and taking with them all their household, they utterly demolished the city; they sacked the dwellings, they uprooted the gardens, they laid the walks in ruins. All the women they seized and carried off to be slaves. And then going out into the country near, they delivered over in their desperation all the land to the fire and sword. No pity had they on the beauty of the gardens, none on the value of the flocks, none on the richness of the domains. Indeed they went so far, that, as the report of this atrocious business gained ground in the neighbourhood, the whole community were immediately on the move. To arms! to arms! Pursue the foreigners! Death, death to them all! And now, behold, Jacob with all his household is in most imminent peril of his life! He must lose no time; he must quickly depart, and, unless God had taken him under His special protection, he too, let him fly where he will, must have been infallibly lost. Oh, what complications! Oh, what turmoils! Oh, what hair-breadth escapes! Oh, what excesses were here! And all for what? For one act of over-indulgence, shown by a fond father to his self-willed daughter. How many anxious sleepless nights, think you, must this have cost Jacob? Would it not have been far better for him to have caused that darling child some transitory sorrow, and allowed her to go on weeping and intreating, rather than have brought on himself on her account a sorrow so very terrible?

7. My brethren, these facts are recorded in the Divine Scriptures for our learning; and my reason for adducing them arises from the earnest desire I feel that you should appreciate them and profit by them, as you ought. Ay, ay; be well assured, there is great truth in the saying of Solomon;

A child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame (Prov. xxix. 15.) The fathers are the first to suffer from the bad effects of the liberty, in which they allow their sons (the very point I wish to impress on you in this second part of my sermon): and therefore let them be wise in placing a restraint upon them betimes, from their earliest years, from their incipient boyhood; and let them form an early habit of answering them with a *No*, and take care, when they wish you to let them follow their own ways, not to suffer yourselves to be so soon unmanned by their winning solicitations: "for a child left to himself will become headstrong" (Ecclus. xxx. 8, Vulg.) And does it not really reflect on you great shame, that they are become so completely your masters, that, sooner than see them with a few beguiling tears on their cheeks, you consent to their going to any comedies, however indecent; to any revels, however licentious; to any amusements, however disorderly?

I desire you by all means to love your children: yes, Sirs; but let your love be such, as will do them good, and not harm. What a hearty affection did that celebrated Queen Blanche bear towards Lewis her young child and her King! "Ah Sire," she would continue repeating to him, "I would much sooner see you dying in my arms, than see you commit one deadly sin." And why is not your love towards your child of the same manly character, when you have also before you the example of women in a private sphere of life, who have cherished towards their offspring similar maternal affections, not unworthy of a Royal breast? The like to this, at all events, were the words ever on the lips of the blessed Humiliana, said to be one of the Cherchi, both for her lineage and personal sanctity renowned in Florence; and at a time when, not as it was in the case of Lewis, death was at a distance, but when her dear noble little ones were actually at the very point of dying. "Children," she would say, "I cannot bewail your lot; for I am far more willing to behold each of you bearing his Baptismal robe now pure and clean to Paradise, than to see you surviving to defile it." No less are the triumphs, which Grace can obtain over nature in the heart of a woman—and that woman a mother!

I have now, it seems to me, sufficiently tried your patience, and therefore I conclude. My only wish is, that you should go hence with this conviction deeply impressed on your minds, that the salvation of your children, generally speaking, must almost wholly rest with yourselves, beyond what even that of the smaller vessels does in a storm with those, who steer them. And therefore bear with me, when I tell you, that such as you would have them to be, such they will be: if vicious, then they will be vicious; if holy, then they will be holy. And this I state advisedly, having many examples in the lives of the Saints for my authority. Why then, my brothers and sisters in CHRIST, do you not procure this blessing for yourselves? What deters you? What discourages you? What is the obstacle in your way? *Chastise thy son: despair not* (Prov. xix. 18, Vulg.) So say I with the wise man. Why not, for GOD's sake, just venture on the trial, and see, whether such a blessed lot might not be yours. Oh, how happy would you be on finding yourself the father or the mother of a saintly child! Do you not envy the mighty mother of the Maccabees her highly distinguished progeny? Do you not envy Elkanah his Samuel? Do you not envy Chelcias his Susanna? Well; they moulded their children into what they were. Go, and do the same; and then, without fail, you also will have people to envy you, after a godly sort, at some future day.

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